

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN
FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The history of the United States educational system has been plagued by issues of inequity. After the notable case of *Brown v. Board of Education* a new and unintended consequence surfaced, there was a lack of African American educators. Currently, the high school principal role is filled by predominately middle class White males. In the state of Texas females make up approximately one third of all high school principals. When including race, namely, African American females they make up less than 5% of the females in the high school principalship. In examining the high school principalship where schools serve varying populations, low socioeconomic, students of color, and those with varying needs the leadership style of the principal is essential to serving all students. Culturally responsive leadership looks at serving all students regardless of demographics or background. Current research on African American Female Principals is present. There is also research on culturally responsive leadership. However, there is a lack of research which aims to investigate the combined experiences of African American Female Principals who are culturally responsive. Through this qualitative phenomenological case study, I provide insight and counterstories of experiences by African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas. Furthermore, the present study provides perspectives about how these African American female principals are impacted by race and gender in their current roles. The principals shared their experiences with perceptions about them as African American female principals, the daily challenges they faced in life, their schools, and community, as well as, the external forces that influenced them on their journeys. The principals, through questionnaires and

interviews, shared their personal and professional experiences which impacted their journey as principals as well as their journey to becoming culturally responsive leaders.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my two beautiful daughters, Imani and Nia. Girls, mommy is so thankful for you and the support you have provided over the years. Thank you for being you! Thank you for sharing me with so many people while serving as your mom. I thank you for the late homework nights together and the encouragement to persevere through this dissertation. I cannot express how much I love you ladies and how proud I am of you. I hope I have modeled what it means to be a woman, a mother, a principal, and a student with grace and class. I love you Spicegirls!

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NOMENCLATURE

NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCES	Nation Center for Educational Statistics
WT	Womanist Theory
CRL	Culturally Responsive Leadership
TEA	Texas Education Agency

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2015) the student demographic break down for 2012 consisted of 51% White, 16% Black, 24% Hispanic, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. During the 2011-2012 school year the NCES also reported there were approximately 115,540 principals in schools throughout the United States. Out of the approximately 90,000 principals in public education 80% were non-Hispanic White, 10% non-Hispanic Black or African American, 7% Hispanic, and 3% were classified as another race/ethnicity. Within the same statistics, female principals accounted for 52% overall with 64% in elementary, 42% middle school, and 30% in high schools. Roane and Newcomb (2013) confirmed females account for a little over half of the principal population and the percentages decrease from elementary toward high school. NCES further stated that the elementary break down by race was 8% Hispanic, 79% White, 10% Black, and 3% other. Middle school principal break down was 6%, 80%, 12%, and 3% respectively and high school was 6% Hispanic, 83% White, 9% Black, and 3% other as well. By 2024, the combined student population, namely Hispanic and Black, will increase in diversity by approximately 8%. Specifically, the White student population will decrease by 5%.

As the student population increases in diversity, the diversity in the principalship decreases, especially in relation to race and gender (NCES, 2015). Roane and Newcomb (2013) also stated, 51% of the U.S. student population will consist of low socioeconomic students, African American students, and Hispanic students. The point was further

extended that over 80% of principals during 2020 will be White, 11% Black, and 7% Hispanic (Roane and Newcomb, 2013). Hyndman (2009), Witherspoon and Taylor (2010) provided historical context by adding that high school principals have consisted of predominately White males for centuries (Hyndman, 2009; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010). Small percentage gains in the number of women in the high school principalship have been visible; however, there are few African American female principals at the high school level (Marczynski & Gates, 2013). Sherman and Wrushen (2009) stated, “Ethnic minorities, men and women combined, represent only 12% of principals...the numbers become more dismal as categories are disaggregated to gender” (p. 176). Although African American female principals exist, their stories describing the personal and professional journey in school leadership are rarely told. One such story follows.

The first African American principal in the United States, Fannie Jackson Coppin, was a woman born into slavery. In her autobiography, *Reminiscences of School Life, and Hints on Teaching*, Fanny Jackson-Coppin (1913) told her story, which laid the foundation for me and other African American female principals today. “I never rose to recite in my classes at Oberlin but I felt that I had the honor of the whole African race upon my shoulders. I felt that, should I fail, it would be ascribed to the fact that I was colored” (Coppin, p. 15). Ms. Coppin knew her work extended beyond herself and would make a lasting impression on African American female principals for years to come. She was purchased at the age 12, and spent her childhood as a servant, and when she could, she would study. In the mid-1800s, Ms. Coppin enrolled in Oberlin College, the only college at the time allowing women and African Americans to attend their

campus (Coppin, 1913). While studying at the college, Ms. Coppin spent her time giving back and teaching reading and writing to free African Americans. She shared (Coppin), “I formed an evening class for them, where they might be taught to read and write. It was deeply touching to me to see old men painfully following the simple words of spelling; so intensely eager to learn. I felt that for such people to have been kept in the darkness of ignorance was an unpardonable sin, and I rejoiced that even then I could enter measurably upon the course in life which I had long ago chosen” (Coppin, p. 18). Upon her graduation in 1865, she served as a teacher of Greek, Latin and math at the Ladies Department at Philadelphia’s Institute for Colored Youth. There she was also appointed as the principal of the institute, becoming the *first* African American woman to serve as a school principal. She served 37 years at the Institute. During her tenure she was promoted to superintendent by the board of education. She was also the first African American superintendent of a school district in the United States (Coppin). The story of Fannie Jackson Coppin provides a historical context to African American women in the principalship dating back to the 1800s. Over 150 years later, it is still rare to find an African American female in the principalship.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

The significant case of *Oliver L. Brown et al. v. the Topeka (KS) Board of Education (Brown)* (1954) was the monumental case for desegregation in the United States. The case can be viewed as a milestone for this country. At the same time, it can be viewed as an alarm to the dismissal of African American educators (Tillman, 2004). When *Brown v. Board* came into law history began with the integration of African

American and White students in the classroom. However, the African American teacher, principal, and superintendent were lost in the midst of this historic change. As stated by Chelsey (2004), “While some scholars contend that African American students have received equal and greater educational opportunities as a result of *Brown*, others claim that tradeoffs such as demotion of Black principals, closing of formerly Black schools, busing of Black students out of their neighborhoods, and the quality of the education received by African American students in integrated settings have been detrimental to them” (p. 299). Obviously, not all African American educators were needed; they were not all asked to serve in the educational system or invited to teach White students. In other words, some were fired. Tillman (2004) asserted, “The firings threatened the livelihood of Black educators, the structure, values, and cultural norms of the Black community, and ultimately the social, emotional, and academic success of Black children” (p. 281).

The decrease of African American educators after desegregation foreshadowed the lack of African American educators that would serve in the future. Chelsey (2004) stated that one of the negative impacts of *Brown* was the reduction of African American teachers and principals. Many principals were demoted to assistant principals under currently seated White principals, while others were removed creating a reduction in African American teachers and principals (p. 305). Since *Brown*, leadership from African American principals has continued to dwindle and has failed to gain momentum. Tillman (2004) stated, “Fifty years after *Brown* and 40 years after the Civil Rights Act, African American educators must bring their gifts, reclaim their tradition of African

American excellence in leadership” (p. 301). African American leadership must continue despite the past.

The history of the African American educator has, indeed, endured hardship. African American females, in particular, have endured struggles and challenges because of their race and gender (Tillman, 2004). Many African American females are rare in the high school principalship, because they are not men, and they are not White. Simultaneously, there is a lack of mentors and role models who reflect the diverse population of students being served in public schools across the country (Horsford, 2012). Furthermore, the lack of female principals and those of color provides influence as to who people perceive should lead schools (Marczynski & Gates, 2013).

The percentage of students and educators should be proportionate within the educational system. Tillman (2004) focused on the limited number of African American educators serving post-Brown and their impact as leaders. In reflecting on the needs of campus leadership in public schools, there is a gap in the literature related to information on African American Female High School Principals’ leadership. Peters (2012) focused her research on challenges faced by African American female principals, but added age as a variable while examining school leadership. African American female principals have to confront issues of race and gender in their roles as leaders more frequently than do their counterparts (Reed & Evans, 2008).

Horsford (2012) suggested there is a high interest in studying issues such as social justice, equity, and diversity as it relates to leadership in schools. While there is research on the principalship and leadership, there are limited studies on research

specific to African American female principals and culturally responsive leadership. Aponte-Soto et al. (2014) commented, “The United States is becoming increasingly culturally diverse, but much work remains to prepare evaluators to respond to communities that differ from their cultural contexts” (p. 38). At the same time the experience of the African American female in the principalship is rare. Peters (2012) shared there is a, “body of literature that investigates the experiences of African-American and women principals in general and African-American female principals in particular, provides a foundation of understanding Black women’s experiences in school leadership” (p. 24); however, she stated this research needs to be expanded. As established by the NCES (2015), the lack of females and African Americans in the principalship role is limited. While separate research exists on leadership, the principalship, African American educators, and culturally responsiveness there are few researchers who have combined the research topics of the African American female principal and culturally responsive leadership.

Culturally responsive leadership is a theory that challenges leaders, teachers, researchers, and educators to improve the academic success of all students regardless of race or economics (Gay, 2000). Scholars such as Geneva Gay (2000), Lisa Delpit (1995), and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) have suggested there are achievement issues with Hispanic, African American, and students who have a low socio-economic status. As these particular student populations grow there is a need to be responsive and proactive in the quest to educate all students and reduce the achievement gap in the process. Gay (2000) further stated that when culturally responsive teaching takes place

it, “is a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities” (p. 20). Ladson-Billings (2009) further extended this thought by stating when it is done correctly there is a, “strong focus on student learning, developing cultural competence, and cultivating a sociopolitical awareness” (p. xi).

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas as the initial phase of this study. In the second phase, I focused on and examined four of the African American female principals in Texas related to challenges they faced due to their race and gender. Secondly, I applied Womanist theory to the experiences of these principals and explored if their journey led them to be culturally responsive leaders in the process.

Significance of the Study

Research, specifically on African American females and their experiences as women of color in the high school principalship is lacking. Marczyński and Gates (2013) mentioned in regards to the principalship, “Previous studies have shown that gender inequity...is manifest and substantive given the ways underrepresentation impacts, norms, values, and beliefs both social and organizational” (p. 706). I hope to contribute to the literature on gender, race, and leadership and more specifically, to expand the research on African American female principals as suggested by Peters (2012). Peters (2012), Wrushen and Sherman (2008), and Tillman (2004) confirmed in their work the gap in literature on African American school leaders and their perspectives. This

research adds to the perspective of African American female school leaders. Through this research, I also provide awareness and perspective to the voices of four African American principals with others who aspire to this role. I hope to offer insight to university educator programs, alternative principal certification programs, and districts seeking African American female leaders. I also sought to identify qualities and characteristics necessary for African American female principals to be successful culturally responsive leaders. Finally, this study is significant because it delivered an understanding into the question of whether being an African American female principal directly results in being a principal who is a culturally responsive leader.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of terms used throughout my study:

African American

This term refers to Americans of African descent. The term African American may be interchanged with the term, Black.

Counterstorytelling

This term as described by Horsford (2010) originated from critical race theory as a tool used by scholars to capture and illustrated "...marginalized experiences while challenging mainstream narratives that may be readily accepted as objective truths" (p. 295).

Cultural Responsiveness

This term as defined by Gay (2000) refers to "...using the culture knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29).

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) described a culturally responsive leader (CRL) as one who can, "...look beyond their own personal beliefs, values and biases to see other people for who they are—One who is willing to relate to and learn about others and then embrace their differences as they lead and impart change" (p. 183).

White

This term refers to White Americans, primarily those of European descent.

Womanist Theory

This term womanist credited to Alice Walker, was derived from, "a black matrilineal folk expression, primarily to describe exponents of a black or coloured feminism" (Chohan, 2000, p. 1). Chohan (2000) further stated that Walker, "expatiates on 'womanism' as a universal humanist, non-separatist, creative and spiritual woman culture shaped by **race** and **gender** oppressions, connected to but distinguished apart from a mainstream feminist activism: 'Woman is to feminist as purple is to lavender' (p. 1). The term Womanist may be interchanged with the terms Black feminist or African-American feminist theory.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework of Womanist theory and conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership is used to support and guide this phenomenological case study. I described each as follows.

Womanist Theory

Womanist theory focuses on the intersection of race and gender in relation to the African American woman and works as a catalyst for social change (Saulnier, 1996). Collins (2000) stated, “For U.S. Black women as a collectivity, the struggle for a self-defined Black feminism occurs through an ongoing dialogue whereby action and thought inform one another” (p. 30). Womanist theory, also known as Black feminism or African-American feminism, is an expansion of feminist theory. Feminist theory expounds on the experiences of White middle class women whereas womanism takes race into account (Boisnier, 2003). Saulnier (1996) added, “Race is an all-encompassing and powerful determinant of people’s lives. Race and gender are experienced, however quite differently by black and white women” (p. 117). Saulnier (1996) continued to state Womanist theory accurately portrays the work and history of black women. “White women, for example, are often unaware of their own experience of race or the privileges accorded to them as members of the dominant group; thus, it is sometimes difficult for white women to understand the importance that many black women put on race, or the relative constancy of the effects of social perceptions of racial differences” (Saulnier, 1996, p. 117). Womanist theory added perspective and substance to my own personal

and professional experiences as an African American female principal. Womanist theory is discussed further in Chapter two.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

While examining African American female principals in the context of Womanist theory, I provided a foundation and context to the question of whether being an African American female principal equates to being a culturally responsive leader. Culturally responsive leadership is defined as, “The ability and willingness of the leader to look beyond their own personal beliefs, values and biases to see other people for who they are—One who is willing to relate to and learn about others and then embrace their differences as they lead and impart change” (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012, p. 183). In addition, Gay (2000) stated culturally responsive educators have to identify and praise students and their individuality while teaching and leading to impact positive change for all students (p. 1). When cultural responsiveness is observed in leadership and teaching all students and the school benefit academically. Gay also said, “Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the culture knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). This definition of culturally responsiveness and that of Womanist theory served to provide context and a foundation to the study of African American Female High School Principals.

By examining Womanist theory and cultural responsive leadership within this study the counterstories, voices, and lived experiences were illustrated while examining these four African American Female High School Principals. The interview data

provided the opportunity for these principals to share their experiences as African American females.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my study were as follows:

1. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?
2. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?
3. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?
4. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

Focus

The study had the following foci:

1. The sample (for questionnaires) of African American Female High School Principals was drawn from local school districts in the state of Texas.
2. The sample (for interviews) selected was dependent on the number of African American Female High School Principals who volunteered to be interviewed for the study and their proximity to the researcher (200-300 mile radius).
3. The research was conducted during the school year to provide flexibility with individual schedules, testing schedules, and work schedules to provide time to gather the data needed to complete the research.

There was limited access to individuals who fit the criteria to be interviewed. At the time of this study, there were 2,217 female principals K-12 in Texas, specifically 527 at high school campuses (campuses with grades 8 through 12). However, out of the 527 female high school principals in the state of Texas only 78 were African American females according to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

There were two phases and two samples of the study. The study sample (for questionnaires and interviews) included 78 African American Female High School Principals within the state of Texas. In the second phase, the proximity of the principals was important in interviewing the subjects. This also ensured I was able to contact and work with the principals within the specified window of time. This assisted in time management and financial resources going into the research process. At the same time this also targeted the sample and provided the opportunity for themes to surface in the research. I focused on African American females; therefore, no males were interviewed. Also, since the focus was on African American female leaders, there were only interviews of women who were of African American decent.

Assumptions

This study was conducted in two phases and included the following assumptions: (a) 76 African American high school female principals would be surveyed using a questionnaire; (b) the selected African American female principals would respond to the interview questions with integrity and honesty; (c) the data recorded would provide insight into the lived professional experiences of what it meant to be a culturally

responsive high school leader, and (d) the data collected would be analyzed to capture and reflect the thoughts and words of the participants noted in the research.

Organization of the Study

This research study is presented in ten chapters. Chapter I served as the introduction to the study. It included the background and significance of the study, the purpose and the definitions, as well as the theoretical frameworks and organization of the study. Chapter II is comprised of the critique of the literature on the segregated history of the United States education system, the need for culturally responsive teaching, learning, and leadership, as well as African American women in educational leadership. Chapter III included a framework of the methodology of the research study. It provided the research approach, context, population and sample, as well as the instruments, data collection and analysis of the study, along with the research perspective.

In Chapter IV, I shared the findings related to the questionnaire shared with 76 African American Female High School Principals. Chapters V through VIII included individual chapters on each of the four African American Female High School Principals who participated in the face-to-face interview. Chapter IX concluded the findings with a cross-case analysis on the questionnaires and the individual face-to-face principal interview data.

In Chapter X, I presented the findings as they relate to the African American Female High School Principals, while summarizing similarities and differences of the

participants. This chapter concluded with implications and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

Literature Critique

This chapter includes the critique of the literature as it relates to African American female principals in schools across the United States. Literature correlated to the history of the United States education system, current educational trends with students and educators, cultural responsive leadership and Womanist theory as both frameworks relate to African American female principals. The databases used to search consisted of ProQuest, ERIC (EBSCO), LibCat, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses – Full Text, JSTOR, and Google Scholar for peer reviewed articles and dissertations. The search timeline was from 1995 to 2015. Keywords used to identify literature on African American female principals and culturally responsive leadership were: *African American, Black, female, principal, Brown v. Board of Education, Cultural Responsive Leadership, and Womanist theory*. While researching these terms, I focused on the concepts of experiences, perspectives, influence, leadership, race, and gender. Multiple peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations were identified and reviewed for reference in the literature review.

Introduction

DuBois (1903) stated, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,-the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (p. 9). A divide has existed between White students and students of color since the founding of the United States of America (Horsford,

2010). Specifically, the academic achievement gap between Whites and Blacks since the inception of this country contributes to the current need to respond with cultural responsiveness. Along with such racial divides, there has been a continual emphasis on achieving success in schools for all students. As shared by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009), the challenge of improving academic success for all students, especially those of African American decent, has been a challenge that still persists over time. Yet, there are those who believe that this dream of reaching all students can still be achieved.

Finding the intersection between culturally responsive African American female principals in the literature proved difficult. In seeking to understand this phenomena, it was clear that research is limited on this specific type of leader. Historically, there has been a lack of African American female principals, specifically at the secondary level. At the same time the concept of culturally responsive principals is new, although there is literature on culturally responsive teaching, learning, and pedagogy. As researchers have sought to understand and assist in reforming the education system, there are still gaps where culturally responsive leadership and African American principals should overlap. With an emphasis on leadership, namely African American female principals, I sought to find literature on these leaders and any efforts of culturally responsive leadership. The research came in two separate areas. Research on African American female principals surfaced while research on culturally responsive leadership appeared as well.

In this review and critique of the literature, I focused on leadership within the education system, specifically African American female principals and their leadership, while exploring: (a) Race and Gender in the Principal Role, (b) Womanist Theory, and

(c) Culturally Responsive Leadership. The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to examine the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of African American female principals related to their own race and gender in the principalship. Secondly, Womanist theory will be examined and applied to the experiences of these African American principals. This literature review and critique will intertwine the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership and the theoretical framework of Womanist theory.

History and Inequity of the United States Education System

The history of the education system continues to impact the educational system today (Toldson, 2014). *Brown v. Board of Education* was a monumental United States Supreme Court case which stated separate schools for white and black students were unconstitutional. This 1954 ruling came in response to an 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* which allowed states to segregate their schools based on the notion, “separate but equal” (Toldson, 2014). “The impact of the Plessy case was clear to all: states and their agencies were free to use racial categorization to segregate public places, as they had been doing and would continue to do” (Hoffer, 2014, p. 1). Although immense, this case, still led to substandard educational resources and facilities to Black students (Toldson, 2014). The aftermath of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was followed by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* which challenged the “separate, but equal” notion. The U.S. Supreme Court stated “separate” is inherently “unequal” (Lopez & Burciaga, 2014, p. 799). Lopez and Burciaga (2014) go further to state this ruling, “set in motion a broad-based policy agenda where the United States would ultimately strive to live up to its standards of equality for all people under the U.S. Constitution” (p. 799). In an effort to

adhere to providing equity and access, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued the War on Poverty and issued the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965. This legislation aimed to “equalize educational opportunities and assure that every child can develop his or her inherent mental capacity” (Alford, 1965, p. 483). The legislation established was set to speed the process of implementation and maximize benefits to students as effectively and efficiently as possible (Alford, 1965). After this historical movement for education, the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974 set out to prohibit racial discrimination against faculty, staff, and students (Mongiello, 2011). Given the diversity issues stemming from these milestone cases U.S. students continue to be impacted today.

Although attempts have been made to alter the current education system, the history of education is still laden with issues of segregation, racism, and inequity in the United States. Included in this discussion is the overarching tension created between races and social classes. “The pervasive impact of poverty and racial/ethnic inequality in public schools raises a fundamental tension in our federal system of government” (Cooper, Cibulka, & Fusarelli, 2009, p. 18). Currently, the United States is attempting to overcome years of mistrust and separation by reducing a slow closing achievement gap between White students and students of color. Warren (2014) stated, “our educational system is profoundly marked by racial and class inequity tied to broader structures of poverty and racism” (p. 1). There are still issues of separate but equal, equality versus equity, and superiority versus inferiority in schools. More than half of Latino and Black males grow up in poverty where resources and services are limited and schools are

failing at high rates (Warren, 2014). The United States continues to struggle to right the wrongs that have negatively impacted minority populations for centuries, limiting the opportunity to the American Dream. “Nearly fifteen years after the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, the failures of our educational system with regard to low-income children of color remain profound” (Warren, 2014, p. 1). There is a push to improve the educational system and positively impact all students within this system.

With the rapidly changing demographics of the United States there appears to be the need to address all student populations regardless of race or social status. Cooper et al. (2009) asserted, “Historically, state and local governments paid limited attention to the educational needs of disadvantaged students, whose parents were often not well organized and whose neighborhoods were less likely to be economically vibrant. States and districts tended to marginalize schooling opportunities for segments of at risk populations” (p. 19). As the number of students of color has increased, the United States demographics have shifted. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) pointed out that, “educating everyone’s child has not historically been the dominant national norm. Most schools have been doing an adequate job of providing a quality education for White middle-class students, but this has not been the case for students of color, especially those of color” (p. 602). For the United States to impact all students in the educational setting, all students have to be a priority. Williams (2005) asserted,

The challenges are numerous and differ greatly by geography and population, but there is general agreement about the state of public schools in U.S. urban centers...Over the past twenty years hundreds of millions of dollars have been

spent to conduct research and install many different types of reforms in urban public schools to raise achievement, lower dropout rates, and improve school-community relations. The results of this investment have been minimally positive if at all. (p. 128)

As funds and research pour into education to provide equity (Verstegen, 2015), results must emerge to give all students a chance to excel in the education system. President Obama wrote, “A world-class education is also a moral imperative—the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society. We will not remain true to our highest ideals unless we do a far better job of educating each one of our sons and daughters. We will not be able to keep the American promise of equal opportunity if we fail to provide a world-class education to every child” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 2). Every child needs an equitable opportunity to have every option open in their educational journey.

Race and Gender in the Principal Role

Race and gender play a large role in the reflection of the principalship. The secondary principalship is one position that has been dominated by males (Eckman, 2004). According to Roane and Newcomb (2013) 82% of principals in public education are White, while African Americans represent 11%, Hispanic 7%, and Asian and Native American are 3%. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) confirm that when considering gender and ethnicity the numbers are even lower. This section of the review will critique the literature and examine African American principals, male and female alike. As well as a critique research on females in the principalship within all races. This portion of the

literature review will compare and contrast the experiences of principals in relation to race and gender.

African American Principals

As the demographics of the U.S. populations continue to diversify, the issue of race and culture must be addressed. Tillman (2004) shared, “The issues of race and culture in educational leadership are particularly relevant given the increasing number of African American principals and students in the pre-K-12 education and the need to investigate issues that may be specific to African Americans in school leadership positions” (p. 102). There is the need to examine the relationship of race and culture as it relates to African American principals. Tillman (2004) asserted there is a gap in literature on the impact of *Brown*, pre and post, on African American principals in education. The impact of desegregation has been instrumental in the lack of African American principals in schools today (Karpinski, 2006). Karpinski (2006) continued to share, “Desegregation resulted in the closing and consolidation of schools that created a job crisis that undermined the status of Black educators who traditionally had occupied a valued position in their communities and who were often the bulwark of the middle class” (p. 254). In particular, African American principals were role models and community leaders. “Their removal from the educational landscape or demotion from an esteemed position affected not only these leaders as individuals but also the children and the communities they served” (Karpinski, 2006, p. 238-239). Tillman (2004) added, “African American principals were committed to the education of Black children, worked with other Black leaders to establish schools,...usually in substandard

conditions” (p. 101). Karpinski (2006) complimented the work of Tillman (2004) by pointing out the historical reaction and perspective of African American principals by stating there was a tragic impact on African American principals due to the desegregation of schools within the education community. This impact can still be seen and felt in the current education system “Today these men and women are primarily employed in large, urban school districts and continue to work for the social, emotional, and academic achievement of African American students” (Tillman, 2004, p. 101). Roane and Newcomb (2013) extended those thoughts by stating, “Black principals have a strong commitment to Black students and a deep understanding that these students can learn [and] Black principals place a higher priority on community involvement than White principals” (p. 2). African American principals promote community and relationship in and outside of the school. These attributes are demonstrated by African American principals and are shaped by their ethnic identity, while serving as a foundation for their leadership (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). While the perspective of African American principals is illustrated in the literature, the experiences of female principals can also be examined in the research.

Female Principals

In a reviewing the number of women in the secondary principal role, a move towards equity in leadership exists although the percentage is still low. Mertz (2006) shared that in 1972 women were highly represented as teachers, 88% elementary and 49% secondary. However, the representation in leadership was starkly different in that women represented .01% superintendents, 5% assistant superintendents, 2% high school

principals, 3% junior high principals, and 20% elementary school principals (National Education Association 1973). Mertz (2006) also asserted that the passing of Educational Amendment Title IX in 1972 was pivotal in the move toward gender equity in education administration. Her research tracked the trends of women in education administration every 10 years until the 30th anniversary of Title IX. Mertz (2006) found that during the time period from 1972-2002 women in leadership positions (superintendent to assistant principal K-12) increased substantially tripling the number of women in these roles (Mertz, 2006, p. 548). “From near invisibility, women are in every position in notable numbers and percentages, save superintendent, and nothing can detract from that very real achievement” (p. 550). As Mertz (2006) pointed out there was a dramatic increase in women in educational leadership roles. However, the research was limited in that it did not take into account race and ethnicity.

Marczynski and Gates (2013) continued to assess the move toward equity with women who served specifically in the secondary principalship from 1998-2011 in Texas. The research shared builds off of the previous study by Mertz (2006) on Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972. Both Marczynski and Gates (2013) affirmed that barriers continue to exist for women in the principalship. Some barriers are due to the lack of networking opportunities, others are based off of hiring women after fulfilling more teaching experience, while others are being promoted late in age (Marczynski & Gates, 2013). The lack of women in such leadership positions impacts the educational systems, because “underrepresentation impacts norms, values, and beliefs both social and organizational” (Marczynski & Gates, 2013, p.706). At the same time, this lack of

representation subtly speaks to diversity issues and the perception of who can and cannot lead schools. The study also provides depth to the growth toward equity while comparing 1998 data to that of 2011. The researchers found that there has been a shift in demographics from 1998 to 2011 with more ethnic diversity. Their findings suggested the increase is more prevalent in urban school district where there is a change to mirror the student population, specifically with gender and race.

Gender in the Principal Role

Similarities and differences in gender play a large factor in current research of the high school principal role. Eckman (2004) stated more research is needed on women in educational administration, namely the high school principalship and superintendency. She further stated the need for this particular research is based on the fact that the high school principalship traditionally leads to the superintendency (Eckman, 2004). Women also have a conflict between the demands of work and family life more so than their male counterparts. Eckman (2004) refers to the “second shift” that women traditionally have to balance more so than men. This is where women finish their professional day to go home and begin their personal role as wife and/or mother to their families (Eckman, 2004). Many times women have to make a choice in their roles as high school principals. Either they are success oriented with aspirations of marriage or they seek to be “superwomen” who seek to be equally committed to both their careers and their families which in many cases is unrealistic (Eckman, 2004). “Role conflict occurs as individuals attempt to balance their family and home roles with their personal roles” (Eckman, 2004, p. 369). While balancing both professional and personal lives, men and women have to

manage their time and tasks of running comprehensive high schools (Kochan, Spencer, & Matthews, 2000). Eckman (2004) pointed out that there is a shortage in individuals who will pursue the role of high school principal because of the perception that this individual must be everything to all people to meet the demands of the job. Although women make up a majority of the teaching field, they make up less than 15% of secondary female school principals (p. 367). The lack of female school principals is evident in schools across the country, the lack of African American Female principals is even smaller.

African American Female Principals

As stated by Wrushen and Sherman (2008), many African American female administrators use their own personal journeys as women of color to lead their schools. These women view life, the world, and their experiences from an intersected positionality of both race and gender (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). They also pull from life experiences, as well as personal and family experiences, which influences their leadership. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) also shared that many, if not all, of the women they studied were leaders who used their personal experiences, negative and positive, along with their backgrounds to influence how they lead (p. 461). Their experiences, though different, embraced similar aspects such as overcoming gender issues while leading, using past experiences that directly or indirectly influenced their lives, as well as issues dealing with ethnicity and culture of themselves as well as others (Wrushen & Sherman). These women not only led with power but more importantly they led by influence. Horsford (2012) contended that there are African American leaders in our

schools who lead and influence not only other African Americans but they positively impact all racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups in the leadership roles they have within their schools. Horsford further stated that their “bridge leadership” and their personal and professional experiences as Black women has yet to be fully researched (2012). Roane and Newcomb (2013) complimented the Horsford by conducting research on young African American women principals in the United States. “These women negotiate race, gender and age complexities that shape the ways that they lead. What little research we do have on African American women tells us that, though they struggle for visibility, their experiences with family, culture and spiritual backgrounds influence who they are as leaders” (Roane & Newcomb, 2013, p. 2).

Multiple researchers have addressed the topic of African American females in leadership. Taylor (2004) conducted an inquiry into the experiences of African American women using critical race theory and black feminist perspective. Taylor (2004) sought to examine one woman and her leadership as a principal in the Southeast. She focused on race, gender, and power and the boundaries she incurred as well as the battles she faced. Rose (2013) conducted an ethnographic study on a woman’s perceptions and her journey as an African American principal. She shared her life experiences as she pursued a high school principalship providing context through storytelling. Scinto (2006) conducted a broad study on African American school leaders who served in multiple roles but mainly served predominately Caucasian school districts throughout the United States. Her emphasis was on workplace dynamics and the various challenges faced by these leaders in society. Robinson (2013) conducted a

phenomenological study on the lived experiences of African American women in suburban school districts. The research consisted of ten African American female leaders who served in various roles such as assistant principal, principal, and central office administration. Many of the studies located were conducted by African American women who had similar experiences to their participants. One study stood out particularly because it was done by a man from Africa studying in the United States on an African American female in Texas. This study is similar to my research given that its focus is on culturally responsiveness. Madhlangobe (2009) studied culturally responsive leadership in a school with cultural and linguistic diversity. He sought out to find an educator who was culturally responsive. His intent was not to find a woman of color but a leader. His research led him to an African American female who was a culturally responsive leader. As the participant in this study it has sparked my interest to examine African American Female High School Principals who lead using culturally responsive leadership.

Womanist Theory

As the research base is expanded on African American female leaders, it is imperative to examine these females through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory. The theories behind Black or African-American feminism has grown as knowledge and interest in Black women expand. Many Black women are, “disenchanted with the white-dominated feminist movement because it assume[s] that all women experience similar oppression” (Schiller, 2000, p. 119). Schiller (2000) further expounded on the fact that Womanist theory examines the discrimination experienced by

Black women in three ways -- sex, race, and class. The origins of Black feminism can be dated back to 1862, where Mary Jane Patterson received a college degree from Oberlin College, becoming the first Black woman to graduate college in the United States. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* served as a monumental piece for Womanist theory. Not only did she write of Black feminism, but Dr. Cooper personally overcame the challenges that Black women still face today. "Most notable among them is Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, an educator who rose from slavery to become the fourth African-American female to receive a PhD degree" (Sule, 2014, p. 211). Since that time notable women have contributed to the theory of Womanism such as Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Bell Hooks, Alice Walker and Patricia Hill Collins, to name a few. The aim of Black feminism according to Collins (2015) was, "not only to put black women's experiences in the centre of analysis - to include the missing, as it were - but also and more importantly, to highlight black women's interpretations of our social worlds" (p. 2349).

Womanist theory encompasses the lived experiences of African American women in the United States. Saulnier (1996) asserted, "Womanism is a philosophy and a consciousness that concurrently addresses racism while it attends to sexism in the black community and in the culture at large (p. 118). Collins (2000) further affirmed that African American women have had to deal with three forms of oppressions, "1) the exploitation of Black women's labor essential to U. S. capitalism, 2) the political dimension of oppression has denied African American women the rights and privileges routinely extended to White males, and 3) controlling images applied to Black women

that originated during the slave era attest to the ideological dimension of U.S. Black women's oppression" (p. 4-5). These actions contribute to the subordinate position African American women face today. "Black feminism remains important because U.S. Black women constitute an oppressed group" (p. 22). Black feminist theory seeks to resist oppression while at the same time examines African American women's perspectives, experiences, and ideas from the phenome of being a Black woman (p. 16). "African-American feminists and womanists have argued that additive models of oppression-in which oppressive systems are seen as parallel and only occasionally intersecting-hide from view, and therefore from change, interlocking systems" (Saulnier, 1996, p. 119). Womanist theory asserts that race and gender must be examined in context and at the same time.

Phillips and McCaskill (1995) defined Womanism as a concept with its own goals, characteristics, and methods that are not equivalent to Black feminism. They further stated, "The central organizing principle of womanism is the absolute necessity of speaking from and about one's own experiential location and not to or about someone else's (p. 1010). Lindsay-Dennis (2015); added, "Womanism is a social change methodology that stems from everyday experiences of Black women and their modes of solving practical problems. The goals of Womanism include using everyday people to solve problems, ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and nature, and reconnecting humans with the spirit realm" (p. 510-511).

Womanist Identity Development

Parks, Carter, and Gushue (1996) shared that over the last 20 years various identity models have been created to demonstrate that “race and gender cannot be treated merely as demographic or sociological variables but attempt to approach race and gender psychologically, based on the levels of identification with one’s race and gender” (p. 624). Boisnier (2003) added, “Researchers have begun to explore the issue of feminist identity development in ethnically diverse populations. Previous research suggests that the experiences of feminist identity development may differ for women from different racial or ethnic groups” (p. 211). Parks et al. (1996) stated Cross’s (1971) Black racial identity model suggested race is not adequate to describe qualities of racial group members. This model pointed out that there are varying degrees by which African Americans relate to African American culture. The relation between the two can be demonstrated in stages as illustrated in Table 1. (Parks et al., 1996).

Table 1
Black Racial Identity Model

Stages	Definitions
Preencounter	Idealization of Whites and Whiteness. Denigration of Blacks and Black culture.
Encounter	Rejection of White culture. Beginning of search for Black Identity. Confusion and intense affect mark this transitional stage.
Immersion-Emersion	Withdrawal into Black world. Idealization of Blackness. Embracing of stereotypical image of Blackness. Denigration of Whiteness.
Internalization	Internally defined positive Black identity. Transcendence of racism. Acceptance of positive aspects of White culture.

Note. Adapted from “At the crosswords: Racial and womanist identity development in black and white women,” by Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74, p. 625.

Downing and Roush (1985) created the Feminist Identity Model which examines White female identity. “Downing and Roush’s five stages of feminist identity development closely parallel the Black identity development states of the Cross model” (Boisnier, 2003, p. 212). This can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
White Racial Identity Model

Stages	Definitions
Contact	Naïve denial of racism in current society. Acceptance of White values as “normal.” Claims to be “color-blind.”
Disintegration	Internal conflict caused by recognition of societal racism. Overidentification with or patronizing attitude toward Blacks.
Reintegration	Withdrawal into White culture. Denigration of Blacks. Belief in White cultural superiority.
Pseudo-Independence	Intellectual, but not emotional, acceptance of Blacks. Discomfort with close personal interaction with Blacks.
Autonomy	Internally defined nonracist White identity. Openness to an interest in other cultures. Capacity for the interest in close relationships with Blacks as well as with Whites.

Note. Adapted from “At the crosswords: Racial and womanist identity development in black and white women,” by Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74, p. 625.

Helms (1991) expanded both identities based off of research on African American women which led to the Women’s Identity Model.

Chohan (2000) shared, Alice Walker, an African American writer, “centralises black women’s experiences, consciousness and culture from an African American womanist perspective” (p. 1). Walker is credited for defining and providing a perspective of womanist thought which focuses on empowering African American

women as they journey through experiences and relationships which assist in overcoming inequity and developing identity (Chohan, 2000).

As stated by Ossana, Helms, and Leonard (1992),

The womanist model, however, suggests that the crucial issue in developing a healthy identity as a woman is not as much the gender of the group that defines the external norms, as it is that the woman allows external standards from either gender to govern her identity development. Therefore, to become a womanist, women must overcome the tendency to use male (or female) or societal stereotypes of womanhood and define for themselves what being a woman means. (p. 403)

Ossana et al. (1992) stated, “Helms (1990) proposed a four-stage model of womanist identity in which she hypothesized that development of healthy identity in women involves movement from external standards of gender identity to internal standards (p. 402). Womanist theory can be used as a resource to assist women in navigating their own womanist identity.

Womanist theory can be categorized into four stages of the womanist identity, Preencounter (nonconscious identification with external devaluing standards of womanhood); Encounter (conflicted perspectives with regard to what is appropriate for oneself as a woman); Immersion-Emersion (rejection of male supremacist views of womankind and the search for a self-affirming definition); and Internalization (development of personally meaningful internal standards of womanhood) (Ossana et al., 1992).

Accordingly, in stage 1 of the womanist identity model, Preencounter, the woman conforms to societal views about gender, holds a constricted view of women's roles, and nonconsciously thinks and behaves in ways that devalue women and esteem men as reference groups. In the second stage, Encounter, she begins to question the accepted values and beliefs of the Preencounter stage as a result of contact with new information and/or experiences that heighten the personal relevance of womanhood and suggest alternative ways of being. Idealization of women, particularly those who expand the definition of womanhood, and active rejection of male-supremacist definitions of womanhood (regardless of their source) are characteristic of the early part of the third stage, Immersion-Emersion. The latter part of this stage is characterized by a search for a positive, self-affirming definition of womanhood and intense affiliations with women. In the fourth stage, Internalization, the woman incorporates into her identity constellation a positive definition of womanhood based on personal attributes, views other women and their shared experiences as a source of information concerning the role of women, but refuses to be bound by external definitions of womanhood. (p. 403)

The womanist identity model, as seen in Table 3, focuses on developing a healthy personal and ideological flexibility with emphasis on how the woman values herself because of her role. For the purposes of this study the Womanist Identity Model will be used to study the four African American Female High School Principals.

Table 3
Womanist Identity Model

Stages	Definitions
Preencounter (Womanist I)	Acceptance of traditional sex roles; denial of societal bias.
Encounter (Womanist II)	Questioning and confusion about gender roles. Tentative exploration of solutions to role conflicts.
Immersion-Emersion (Womanist III)	Externally based feminist stance. Hostility toward men; idealization of women. Intense relationships with other women.
Internalization (Womanist IV)	Internally defined and integrated female identity without undue reliance on either traditional roles or feminist viewpoint.

Note. Adapted from “At the crosswords: Racial and womanist identity development in black and white women,” by Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74, p. 625.

Womanist Theory in Research

Womanist theory has been used in research to specifically study African American women in roles of leadership and their experiences with race and gender. Taylor (2004) examined an African American principal using Black feminist perspective and critical race theory as it relates to race, gender, and power. She examined her experiences as they related to discrimination and barriers and noted one principal’s emerging voice as she led her high school. Robinson (2013) conducted a study on African American females with three theoretical frameworks, critical race theory, racial identity development theory, and Black feminist theory. Her research studied African American leaders in high performing suburban schools. The findings alluded to knowledge and attributes of Black feminism as well as cultural responsive leadership.

Williams (2013) conducted research on African American female leaders using the womanist theory. He captured the experiences of seven women along with their perspectives as it related to their leadership. Womanist theory will add depth to the study and affirm the perspectives and experiences shared by the participants. In the research studies mentioned there are multiple perspectives on examining the African American female leaders however, there is limited research on African American Female High School Principals who lead culturally responsively.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

In response to meeting the current and future educational needs of students in the U. S. education system educators must be aware of culture. Crow and Scribner (2014) stated, “Public schools in cities across the United States are characterized by linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity- high concentrations of poverty in the face of, in many cases, newly gentrified communities, and relentless accountability pressures” (p. 288). The challenges faced by these schools necessitate leaders who can create an environment where all students can learn. Crow and Scribner (2014) also shared, “Given the prevalent mismatch of cultural experiences among students and school professional staff, including school leaders, scholars have argued for increased attention to the role of culture” (p. 289). Aponte-Soto et al. (2014) further stated educating our current and future leaders to become culturally responsive is a necessity. Since the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), the need to fight for educational excellence for all students of color still exists (Love, & Kruger, 2005). Along with the issues of school desegregation, there are also continued issues in education regarding

such items as, “funding, resources, teaching and learning, and achievement” (Horsford, 2010, p. 288). Gay (2002) affirmed the American past has catered to and advantaged White middle-class Americans. The United States history also reaffirmed this stance by the monumental court cases and laws surrounding education. At the same time the past has crippled students of color because of inconsistencies in language, interactions, culture, and expectations not equivalent to their White counterparts.

Historical Context of Culturally Responsive Leadership

In examining the term *Culturally Responsive Leadership* one may focus on the twentieth century experience of leaders. However, Johnson (2006) provided a case study on Gertrude Elise MacDougald Ayer, the first African American woman principal in New York City. This recollection provides a historical context to culturally responsive leadership. Johnson (2006) examined, “her leadership practices in Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s in light of the precepts of *culturally responsive* pedagogy to analyze how she incorporated students’ cultural knowledge as a vehicle for learning” (p. 20). In 1935, Gertrude Ayer received a temporary appointment as principal during a time where racial discrimination was high and the Depression impacted over 60% of her community (Johnson, 2006). During this time the community needs were high with community facility issues, educational needs, and a lack of social services (Johnson, 2006). As times got progressively worse Ayers became a leader who implemented a “child-centered progressive education” program where the focus was to shift the emphasis from teaching subject matter to the child (Johnson, 2006, p. 24). The efforts of Ayers impacted the public school and incorporated curriculum that was intercultural and focused on

relationships. According to Johnson (2006) Ayers was seen as a “progressive administrator with a strong ethic of care, where parents were welcomed, material resources were provided for families in need, and the cultural life of the surrounding neighborhood was viewed as a resource” (p. 24).

In reflecting on the research the actions of Ayers is similar to the work of Ladson-Billings (1995) and builds on cultural relevant pedagogy. Although aligned with cultural pedagogy, Johnson (2006) argued the work of Ayers is relevant to culturally responsive leadership. Although there is a lack of research on culturally responsive leadership, Johnson (2006) shared concerning African American female principals’, “these studies emphasize high expectations for student academic achievement, an ethic of care, and a commitment to the larger ‘community’” (p. 26). As a culturally responsive leader, Ayers not only led her school but incorporated “the history, values, and cultural knowledge of students’ home communities in the school curriculum and worked to develop a critical consciousness among both students and faculty to challenge inequities in the larger society” (p. 27). The history of Gertrude Ayers provides context for principals of today who aspire to lead using cultural responsiveness.

Though there are historical accounts of women who lead culturally responsively there is limited models or matrices which display the characteristics of culturally responsive leaders. In attempting to define qualities of a culturally responsive leader the work of Madhlangobe (2009) on culturally responsive leadership can be used to illustrate the attributes of responsive leaders. In his study he identified qualities within an African American female that demonstrated cultural responsiveness. The six

leadership themes are shown in Figure 1, which all lead to a culturally responsive system.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING				
Persistence and Persuasiveness	Modeling Culturally Responsiveness	Being Present and Communicating	Fostering Cultural Responsiveness Among Others	Caring for Others

Figure 1. Culturally Responsive Leadership Themes

Note. Figure developed from “Culturally responsive leadership in a culturally and linguistically diverse school: A case study of the practices of a high school leaser,” by Madhlangobe, & Gordon, 2012, *NASSP Bulletin*, 96, p. 183.

As indicated in Figure 1, Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) identified six themes necessary to be identified as a culturally responsive leader: (a) relationship building, (b) modeling culturally responsiveness, (c) persistence and persuasiveness, (d) being present and communicating, (e) fostering cultural responsiveness among others, and (f) caring for others.

Relationship building. In this study Madhlangobe (2009) stated building relationships with all stakeholders were vital to the success of a culturally responsive leader. “Faith’s CRL revealed that successful achievement of school goals rests on the creation of positive institutional relationships with all students, with a greater emphasis on relationships with students of color, who often felt excluded” (p. 129). The teachers and parents within the study echoed the same sentiments. “They also believed that *leadership as relationship building* helped to bring about positive change in the school” (p. 130). Madhlangobe (2009) stated the “building relationships” theme included several

subthemes such as “empathizing with others, reducing anxiety among students, reducing anxiety among teachers, respecting others, inspiring responsibility and commitment in others, using humor, being approachable, using students’ testimonies, demonstrating compassion and being democratic” (p. 131).

Persistence and persuasiveness. The findings of Madhlangobe (2009) also spoke to culturally responsive leaders modeling persistence and persuasiveness with members within the school community. “Persistence and persuasiveness proved to be important attributes as Faith carried out her assigned task of developing and implementing a school improvement plan” (p. 144). The actions of Faith aligned to research which suggests there has to be buy-in from the educators and teams to meet the goals set by the campus (Madhlangobe, 2009). His work further confirmed that the leader and teachers focused emphasis on the performance of African American and Latino students. “Faith believed that culturally responsive leaders who show persistence and persuasiveness both inspire others to adopt an inclusive school vision and work toward making that vision a reality” (p. 145). The persistence and persuasiveness allowed teachers to try new ideas and empower teachers to be culturally responsive. Some of the subthemes included, “varied approaches to motivate teachers; being a good negotiator; discussing the worthiness of an idea, using experts to share ideas, being patient, delegating; dealing with power struggles; and using clear and convincing language” (p. 146).

Modeling culturally responsiveness. Madhlangobe (2009) stated, “Faith modeled cultural responsiveness for others. Faith believed that her school’s success

depended largely on her ability as a leader to sensitize others and develop in them the abilities that would help them succeed with diverse groups” (p. 154). Culturally responsive modelling was seen through the acts of being, “flexible, encouraging inclusiveness, being welcoming and warm, encouraging personalized teaching, celebrating diversity, providing legitimacy to different cultures, encouraging collaborative problem solving, using authentic stories, being honest, sharing literature related to cultural responsiveness, acknowledging others and being consistent” (Madhlangobe, 2009, p. 154-155).

Being present and communicating. Madhlangobe (2009) stated being present and communicating was another theme for culturally responsive leaders. This was evident in his observations of the leader, “I observed that Faith maintained high levels of visibility by visiting classrooms, attending and participating in meetings, walking the hallways, and joining collaborative walk-throughs” (p. 168). He further stated her actions were deliberate and aligned with her responses in creating a culturally responsive environment within her school. “Faith explained that her leadership presence was important because it helped to continuously remind others to improve teaching and learning, achieve collaboration, and promote communication with students from minority groups” (p. 168) Madhlangobe (2009) also commented that her leadership actions among teachers and students help to improve discipline. The subthemes for being present and communicating included, “strategic leadership presence, using collaborative walk-throughs, leading from behind, using strategic communication, embracing students’ ways of knowing, and presenting a positive attitude” (p. 170).

Fostering cultural responsiveness among others. In the research conducted by Madhlangobe (2009) he shared how his subject aided in creating opportunities which enabled others to be culturally responsive. He stated, “The importance of fostering CRL is that it empowers others to try different approaches in order to reach all students” (p. 182). Madhlangobe (2009) expanded this thought by confirming with teachers and literature regarding cultural responsiveness and strengthening student achievement. “Subthemes within the theme of fostering cultural responsiveness among others include collaborative classroom vision building, matching leadership behaviors to social contracts, promoting good practices through networking, accepting others, and using home and school experiences” (p. 182).

Caring for others. This theme was prevalent in the work shared by Madhlangobe (2009). The culturally responsive leader intentionally showed she cared for all members within the school community. Her actions aligned to her beliefs which were demonstrated through the relationships, “She expressed her strong belief in the positive effects of caring for others, and pointed out that care helped to strengthen relationships throughout the school community” (p. 193). He went further to share that her actions to develop and strengthen relationships led to helping struggling students and students of color with their student-teacher relationships. “Participants believed Faith’s care for others helped students and teachers develop close rapport and also improved the learning environment for linguistically and culturally diverse students” (p. 194). The subthemes for caring for others consisted of, “supportive and nurturing, giving

information, passion for working with children, being concerned about security, and encouraging culturally responsive pedagogy” (p. 194).

Cultural Responsiveness

The current achievement gap of U.S. public schools proves there is still a need for culturally responsive leaders, teachers, and classrooms (Cochran-Smith, 2001 & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Aponte-Soto et al. (2014) affirmed the United States continues to grow in cultural diverseness, and there is work to be done in regards to cultural context. Students of color still fall behind academically and socially due to the achievement gap. Ladson-Billings (2009) pointed out that African American students have a higher dropout rate, a higher special education representation, and continue to be outperformed academically by their White peers. “Given the increasing racial and ethnic diversity among students in the United States, coinciding with a homogenous teaching population, this topic merits critical examination” (Howard, & Denning del Rosario, 2000, p. 127). According to Medina, Morrone, and Anderson (2005), the U.S. Department of Education predicts schools will hire a majority of monolingual White female teachers over the next decade. They will hire roughly 22 million teachers for an ever growing diverse America (Medina et al., 2005). Medina et al. (2005) further stated that many of these teachers will prefer to work in suburban settings within their own (racial) comfort zone with higher salaries and benefits. Similarly, some educators also feel that they are not part of the achievement gap problem; therefore, there is no need to search within the education system to find a solution (Garcia, & Guerra, 2004). Delpit submitted that teachers of all ethnicities enter the classroom with the intention of

reaching all students but often fall short. Educators set out to teach and reach out to the world without even knowing the world of others exist (Delpit, 1995). With teachers not having this knowledge of others, there is the need to educate and change teaching patterns and negative perceptions continuing to prevent high levels of achievement by all students (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004).

More children with diverse backgrounds are entering classrooms in the twenty-first century; with this influx, the need for culturally responsive pedagogy is a necessity (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2004). At the same time the twenty-first century is also challenged to recruit, retain, and recognize quality teachers, and diverse teachers, to meet the growing needs of public education (Eubanks & Weaver, 1999). As the number of diverse student's increases, the number of diverse teacher's decreases and the achievement gap continues to widen. In order to be responsive and close the gap, leaders and teachers must be knowledgeable and take on a critical role to impact change (Johnson & Uline, 2005). Training of teachers and principals must be purposeful and intentional to impact and create successful schools with our children of diverse backgrounds (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). The goal of the educational system must be to provide an education for all students regardless of their color and economic status (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

As a response to meeting the twenty-first century challenge of diversity in the classroom it is imperative that leaders and administrators reply with culturally responsive leading and teaching. Administrators are the cornerstone to successful schools and student achievement. It is imperative that they are properly trained in

teacher leader programs to impact change for all students (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Educators have an obligation to create schools where there is a culture of inclusiveness. All students, no matter their linguistic or cultural background, should be supported, nurtured, and provided with the best educational opportunities possible (Richards et al., 2004). Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) concluded as demographics change so must leadership practices; they noted that, “leaders of color, and leaders who purposefully ‘choose’ to align their practices toward cultural responsiveness can be recognized as distinctly different, yet working toward the same shared goals based on common challenges” (p. 35).

Researchers on culturally responsive leadership state, schools who achieve the most success are led by leaders who are culturally responsive. To, “examine effectively how culturally responsive a school is to diverse groups, school leaders need frameworks and tools to assist them in identifying these underlying organizational values and beliefs that contribute to inequitable policies and practices” (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p. 798). Taliaferro (2011) further stated, “Successful school leaders provide students with many opportunities to participate in the schooling process” (p. 1). These leaders are aware that students are multifaceted and their culture and heritage speak to who they are as individuals. “By understanding this fundamental tenet of leadership, successful school leaders are able to cultivate an environment of respect, cultural awareness, not only for the staff, students and teachers they serve, but also for themselves” (Taliaferro, 2011, p. 1).

This cultural responsiveness provides the opportunity for teachers and students to collaborate and reflect on their individual and collective beliefs as they relate to culture, values, and knowledge (Fraise & Brooks, 2015, p. 15). Fraise and Brooks (2015) added, the leader then has the ability to create, “an environment in which students feel safe enough to be themselves and in which their anxiety is lowered to the point that they can concentrate on learning in a culturally safe environment” (p. 14). Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) found in their study that “leaders of color in the U.S. spoke of remembering educational injustices throughout their schooling experiences. These ranged from being placed in the back of the room with other children of color, being assessed for language and special education services, sitting outside of the classroom for ‘disrupting’ others and being ‘placed’ in remedial classes in secondary school” (p. 34). Instances such as these challenged these principals to become leaders who used their personal experiences and identities to impact change in their schools (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). When a safe atmosphere is present, culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching can occur.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

An effective culturally responsive leader must build a campus of culturally responsive teachers. Culturally responsive teaching is defined by Gay (2002) as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Gay based her definition on the notion that providing academic skills and knowledge and incorporating real life experiences, students can relate to the learning experience, making it more personal and interesting,

resulting in higher academic achievement in relation to ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002). Culturally responsive pedagogy creates an atmosphere, which supports achievement for all students. It extends not only language and culture but it also, “uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19). In turn, there is a connection to and validation of a students’ cultural heritage, background, and culture, which connects and provides meaning from home to school; it also provides curriculum in multiple learning styles to reach students regardless of background or experience while building on multicultural aspects that will enhance learning for all students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). At the same time culturally responsiveness allows teachers to focus on the strengths of their students, identifying and nurturing their development to promote achievement in all students (Richards et al., 2004). Culturally responsive teaching and learning places emphasis on the practice of teaching more than the curriculum presented. It intentionally examines the beliefs and behaviors of teachers and how they approach all learners. Culturally responsiveness in turn will positively impact students to aim for, strive, and choose to excel academically (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In Ladson-Billings’ *The Dreamkeepers*, she studied five women who were culturally responsive. They were women of varied backgrounds that had few similar characteristics. However, the linking theme to these individuals was that in some point in their lives they had a life changing experience that impacted their lives and their perspective on how they taught all children. (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These teachers were able to respond to all children; specifically they were able to reach African

American students whom others had failed to impact. Culturally responsive teaching allows for various views and multiple perspectives on issues such as race, gender, class and ethnicity. It allows for discussion on negative trends and creates dialogue for dealing with controversy, and individual and ethnic groups in various contexts (Gay, 2002).

When culturally responsive leadership is evident it will be seen through teachers and students. When the atmosphere is conducive for all students to learn and, “we begin to understand and then embrace the unique culture of every student and every educator, we have taken an initial step toward practicing a culturally relevant leadership” (Fraise & Brooks, 2015, p. 17).

Culturally Responsive Female Leaders

In addition to teacher leaders there is the need to examine females and cultural responsiveness in the administrator role. As noted by Eckman (2004) many of the principals in the high school setting are males, but the majority of the teachers are female. Gender plays a substantial role in who secures a principalship at every level, especially high school (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008, Eckman, 2004). Eckman (2004) further stated women in education administration operate in a male-dominated field where the characteristics of appropriate leadership qualities are based off of men.

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) also stated that many female administrators use their own personal journeys as women and women of color to lead their schools. They pull from life experiences, as well as personal, and family experiences, which influences their leadership (459). Wrushen and Sherman (2008) shared that many, if not all, of the women they studied were leaders who used their personal experiences, negative and

positive, along with their backgrounds to influence how they lead (p. 461). Their experiences, though different, embraced similar aspects such as overcoming gender issues while leading, using past experiences that directly or indirectly influenced their lives, as well as issues dealing with ethnicity and culture of themselves as well as others (Wrushen & Sherman). These women were leaders who lead with power but more importantly they lead by influence.

United States growth and expansion call for the need to examine and serve all students of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. Culturally responsive leadership is an integral tool to bridge and close the gaps between White students and students of color (Delpit, 1995). Time must be invested to respond and educate instructional leaders who hold the fate of students in their hands (Fraise & Brooks, 2015). Exploration of knowledge and investment of culturally responsive leading has to take place within our current education system to meet the growing demands of our society and our schools. Once cultural responsiveness is in action the education system can respond and impact learning for all students regardless of their background, experience, or ethnic background. As Schein (1992) eloquently stated, “Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead” (p. 15).

Summary

As the demographics within the nation and world become increasingly diverse, there is the need to have leaders within the education system who can respond effectively to our diverse populations (Banks, 2008). Culturally responsive leaders must

be aware that culture and leadership are two concepts that have to complement each other to impact the education system (Fraise & Brooks, 2015, p.6). In an effort to effectively respond to achievement gaps in education, attempts are continuously made to reach and teach all students regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and background. A response to meeting this growing need is to equip all educators to be culturally responsive, which would in turn provide equity in education (Gay, 2000). Because of the current reality and discrepancies in education, cultural responsiveness is a necessary resource needed to repair the gaps between students of color and their White counterparts in the United States education system (Gay, 2000).

In this critique of the literature I explored the role of race and gender in the principal role. Womanist theory was also critiqued and explored as a theoretical framework to African American female principals. Finally, a historical context of culturally responsive leadership was shared and examined. This review laid out tangible and relevant examples of African American women in leadership. However, I found gaps in the literature that spoke to African American high school female principals who lead using cultural responsiveness. I also found limited research that illustrates the need to explore how future administrators and principal preparation programs can support African American females which will impact the educational landscape.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas as the initial phase of this study. In the second phase, I focused on and examined four of the African American female principals in Texas related to challenges they faced due to their race and gender. Secondly, I applied Womanist theory to the experiences of these principals and explored if their journey led them to be culturally responsive leaders in the process.

Research Approach

This dissertation employed a phenomenological case study on the experiences, perspectives and challenges of African American Female High School Principals in Texas related to their race and gender. According to *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (Schwandt, 2007), phenomenology seeks to provide perspective to an individuals' lived experience. Phenomenology also takes into account experiences that occur on a daily basis from the perspective of the said individual (Kindle Loc 2579). The case study approach is an appropriate method to frame the study as it will examine the phenomenon of the lived experiences of African American females bounded by their role as principals in high schools across Texas; therefore, I approached my methods from a phenomenological (lived experience) approach and within a case study. Creswell (2007) affirmed this by adding research is inclusive of an explored issue within a

bounded system. Merriam (2002) further stated, “Qualitative case studies ...search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (p. 179). I sought to conduct the following with my research: (a) intertwine the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership and the theoretical framework of Womanist theory as I (b) examined the perspectives and experiences of four African American female principals in Texas related to their challenges with race and gender and also (c) applied Womanist theory to the experiences of these principals and explored if their journey led them to be culturally responsive leaders in the process.

Phenomenology

The purpose of phenomenological research was to describe “...the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon...describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57-58). I used a phenomenological approach to examine African American female principals and portray their lived experiences as women of color in this particular leadership role. Lincoln and Guba (2005) pointed out, “We believe that a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those phenomena” (p. 197). They further stated that the experiences and activities have an impact on the individuals as well as the world around them. The selection of phenomenological research for this study, “lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world...there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time”

(Merriam, 2002, p.3-4). In turn these experiences and interactions provide context and meaning to the world around us. Specifically, Merriam (2002) indicated phenomenological research emphasizes “the essence or structure of an experience” (p. 7). Phenomenological research also probes the everyday life of a subject and their experience from the inside out. Merriam (2002) also shared, “Phenomenological research emphasizes the lived experience not only of the research participants but also that of the researcher” (p. 117). I aspired to illustrate the multiple experiences of these women and describe their lived experiences while examining the interaction between these individuals and the world in which they live (Merriam, 2002). Simultaneously, these female participants reflected on the definition of culturally responsive leadership to determine if they had knowledge of cultural responsiveness and if it is instrumental in their leadership.

I framed the research by using the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership and the theoretical framework of Womanist theory while examining the impact of race and gender in the principalship. Therefore, this phenomenological case study, “seeks understanding about the essence and the underlying structure” of African American Female High School Principals and their personal and professional experiences (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). The selected frameworks were carefully chosen to better understand their journey and create a case study that would “create an image” of African American Female High School Principals in Texas and the experiences encountered which impacted their campus leadership (Merriam, 2002, p.179).

Context

I studied African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas during the 2015-2016 academic school year. From the 1,473 high school principals in Texas, 78 African American Female High School Principals accounted for roughly 5% of all high school principals (TEA). Although there were approximately 1,500 high school principals in Texas, with approximately 500 of them being female, the focus of this research was on African American Female High School Principals. Research for this study took place during the 2015-2016 academic school year.

Population and Sample

In the state of Texas, there were currently 78 African American high school female principals during the 2015-2016 academic school year. Since I was one of the 78 and I interviewed another African American Female High School Principals for a graduate course, the sample only include 76 participants. The preliminary data gathered through the questionnaires provided a strong authentic base of information. According to TEA (Texas Education Agency) there are eight district types, along with a charter school district type. The district types are listed in Table 4.

Table 4*Texas Education District Types*

District Type	# of districts in this type	# of African American Female High School Principals in this district type
Major Urban	10	21
Major Suburban	78	30
Other Central City	38	5
Other Central City	151	6
Suburban	68	0
Independent Town	213	2
Non-Metropolitan: Stable	28	0
Non-Metropolitan: Fast Growing	443	0
Rural	199	14

I then employ purposeful sampling to identify four African American Female High School Principals in four TEA district types in Texas who exemplify culturally responsive leadership tendencies as defined by Gay (2000). Creswell (2007) stated, “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p.125). The criterion for this Phase I of the research (the questionnaire) was that the participants must be identified as African American Female High School Principals as identified by the Texas Education Agency. All of the principals for Phase I was based on openly accessible data from TEA and from the websites where the principals served. The criteria for Phase II of the research (the interview) was that the participants were: (a) identified as African American Female High School Principals as identified by the Texas Education Agency, (b) one must be from a district [as identified by TEA] one must be

from a designated as major urban, (c) one must be from a district [as identified by TEA] designated as major suburban, (d) one must be from a district [as identified by TEA] designated as other central city, (e) one must be from a district [as identified by TEA] designated as other central city suburban, and (f) all must agree to be interviewed. The information on the participants and the type of district (campus) they served was openly accessible via the TEA website. The 76 participants were divided by district type according to TEA and then sorted in geographical order by distance. The first on the list was contacted for an interview via an email. If that individual agreed and the criterion was satisfied, there were no more interviews in the designated category.

Instrumentation

To accomplish the goal of examining race and gender in terms of principal leadership, in Phase I, I first conducted a research-created, open-ended questionnaire for the 76 African American Female High School Principals. Figure 2 illustrates the questions used to collect participant responses. The questionnaire provided the opportunity for all of the sample population to take part in this study.

Questions - Questionnaire

1. Please describe the characteristics of an African American Female High School Principals.
 2. How long have you been in administration? What specific positions and how long?
 3. How have your experiences as a female impacted you as a high school principal?
 4. How have your experiences as an African American impacted you as a high school principal?
 5. What are some challenges you have faced as an African American Female High School Principals?
 6. What characteristics make up your leadership behaviors?
 7. What are external forces that have impacted your leadership?
 8. How has the organization of the district and the campus impacted your leadership?
 9. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with your superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?
 10. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview either in person, telephone, or online?
-

Figure 2. Open-Ended Questionnaire

The instrument for Phase I, shown in Figure 2 was validated through face validity with two African American high school assistant principals and with two professors who are acutely aware of culturally responsive leadership. According to Nevo (1985) face validity “is obtained by asking people to rate the validity of a test as it appears to them” (p. 288). Nevo (1985) continued sharing that the raters have an interest to or characteristics of the sample participants. Creswell and Miller (2000) added that validity can be achieved by, “the credibility of an account by individuals external to the study” (p. 125). For the purposes of validating this instrument two African American high school assistant principals and two professors were used to evaluate the questionnaire to see if it measured the intended purpose of the research study. The instrument, semi-structured interview protocol, in Phase II, as shown in Figure 3 was validated using face validity as well with two African American high school assistant

principals and two professors to see if the interview questions measured the intended purpose of the research study.

Questions - Interview

1. Tell me about yourself: Professional History, Experience as a leader, Path to leadership.
 2. Describe the teachers in your school (In terms of their attitudes, values, and beliefs about schooling; in terms of instructional strength).
 3. Describe the students in your school (In terms of needs and accomplishments).
 4. Describe the community your school serves (In terms of demands).
 5. How does the diversity in this school and community influence your leadership style?
 6. How has being an African American female principal influenced your leadership?
 7. What challenges have you faced in regards to race as an African American principal? 8. Do you believe there are barriers for African Americans who aspire to the high school principal role?
 8. What challenges have you faced in regards to gender as a female principal? Do you believe there are barriers for females who aspire to the high school principal role?
 9. What are external factors that have impacted your leadership?
 10. How has the organization of the district and campus impacted your leadership?
 11. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with your superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?
 12. What successes have you experienced as an African American Female High School Principals?
 13. What specific experiences, good or bad, impacted you on your journey to the principalship?
 14. How do you as a leader understand culturally responsive leadership? What makes culturally responsive leadership different from other forms of leadership?
 15. What experiences have helped you become a culturally responsive leader?
 16. How do you model culturally responsive leadership?
 17. Is there anything else I should know that will speak to your leadership and your thoughts on culturally responsive leading at a high school?
-

Figure 3. Interview Protocol

Data Collection

The Texas Education Agency provided a list of every principal in the state of Texas. I created a spreadsheet that listed every African American Female High School Principals with their name, school, and contact information (i.e. email address). This list totaled 78 African American Female High School Principals. Being one of the 78 I was omitted from the list as well as the African American Female High School Principals who had already been interviewed for a previous course. An email was sent to 76 African American Female High School Principals sharing the purpose of my study and information of the questionnaire to follow under a separate heading. In attempting to reach all 76 African American Female High School Principals only 59 were reached. In the process of collecting data I found that some principals were no longer in their current positions or their contact information was not accessible to contact them. The participants who were contacted were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary, and their identity would remain confidential. I used Qualtrics to collect data from Phase I participants. The participant names were not used nor was their district names used to ensure they were not identified in reporting responses. The size and type of the district per TEA records could be reported as long as the individual could not be identified. The sample population of the 59 principals received an information sheet regarding the study as well as a copy of the questionnaire. Boser (1988) found a “strong relationship...between response rate and the number of attempts made” to reach participants (p. 371). For this reason, I followed up on the participants by sending three emails to increase the success of the response rate. Porter and Whitcomb (2003) shared

the average response rate for email questionnaires is 15%. My goal was to have at least 15% of the sample respond which would be 11 African American Female High School Principals.

From the returned questionnaires, I purposefully determined the four African American Female High School Principals to be interviewed by category of district type (major urban, major suburban, other central city, other central city suburban). The pre-determined criteria included their district demographics, their definition of cultural responsiveness as compared to Geneva Gay's (2000) definition, their years of experience as a principal, and their response to take part in the interview. My goal in this phenomenological case study was to "access the experience within" these individuals (Merriam, 2002, p. 140).

Interviews are a form of data collection that provides in depth insight into subjects (Merriam, 2002). Individual interviews were used as the foundation to this research study. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to allow for additional questions based off of the subject responses. As Merriam (2002) shared, "The semi-structured interview contains a mix of more and less structured questions" (p. 13). The use of semi-structured interview questions provided the participant with a degree of range in her response providing the opportunity for a rich and in-depth response (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The initial interview was a face-to-face meeting lasting approximately 60 minutes. This allotment provided time for the participants to also become acclimated. It was important that the participants were comfortable during the research process. The intent was to provide a comfortable location and environment where the participants felt

comfortable and were able to be transparent regarding their experiences as African American female principals. “Good interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely...good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents’ perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). After transcribing the interviews and decoding them for similarities, differences, and themes I followed up with each one individually to share themes that surfaced during the data analysis process. Again, each candidate was able to see their responses and provide further information or clarification on their responses. The interviews were recorded using Guitar Hero on a MacBook Pro along with anecdotal notes collected during the research study.

Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study I analyzed the data using the phenomenological analysis process presented by Hycner (1985). The goal in using his procedures to analyze the interview data was to, “sensitize the researcher to a number of issues that need to be addressed in analyzing interview data” (p. 280). This in turn aided in ensuring the research stayed within the realm of phenomenology.

In an effort to honor the phenomenological process, Hycner (1985) suggested the following steps take place (p. 280-293):

1. Transcription.
2. Bracketing and the phenomenological reduction.
3. Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole.
4. Delineating Collective Experience.

5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question.
6. Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning.
7. Eliminating redundancies.
8. Clustering units of relevant meaning.
9. Determining themes from Collective Experience.
10. Writing a summary for each individual interview.
11. Return to the participant with the summary and themes: Conducting a second interview.
12. Modifying themes and summary.
13. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews.
14. Contextualization of themes.

In using the Hycner (1985) analysis process I replaced bracketing with reflexivity in order to provide my own self-reflection as an African American Female High School Principal. Reflexivity as described by Lincoln and Guba (2005) is a process of self-reflection whereas the researcher is an instrument in the process. With this outline, I was able to identify themes, patterns, and commonalities between the interviews and illustrate the true phenomenon of this research.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

I took specific measures to ensure data reliability. Because the questionnaires were emailed to the 76 African American Female High School Principals, the data captured were submitted in their own words. The semi-structured interview questions for

the four principals was shared with the participants at the time of the initial interview. In Phase II, the four principals selected were interviewed and recorded. These strategies assisted in the triangulation of data which insured reliability. As each participant was interviewed and recorded I also took anecdotal notes. Creswell (2007) suggested reliability occurs when the, “researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape” (p. 209). Reliability also took place during the follow up to the interview which pulled the words of the participants from the initial recorded interview to seek clarification and understanding of their responses.

Validity

Merriam (2002) and Creswell (2007) agreed that validity is used to assess the findings as they relate to reality. Lincoln and Guba (2005) stated, validity seeks to find sufficient authenticity (p. 205). Thus, validity is best achieved when it is triangulated using multiple sources. For the purposes of this study, I interviewed each of the participants initially and followed up with each principal after the interview. I also used multiple validation strategies such as member checking (Merriam, 2002) and reflexivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

I validated the research data by conducting a member check on each participant. Member checking means the researcher has gone back to the participants to ensure the intended meaning was captured through the interviews. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is one of the most vital ways to ensure credibility with

participants in the study (p. 314). This compliments the triangulation of the data and provides credibility within the study for the participants and the researcher.

I also used reflexivity to validate the research data. Merriam (2002) stated, “Even in journal articles researchers are being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study” (p. 26). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) shared reflexivity is instrumental in validity in that it is seen as lenses, “that are no longer confined to pure knowledge, or truth claims. Thus validity is seen as a process shaped by culture, ideology, gender, language, and so on” (p. 278). I practiced reflexivity throughout the data analysis process by answering such reflective questions as: *What are my experiences as an African American Female Principal? How has race and/or gender impacted my experiences as an African American Female Principal? Are my thoughts on my journey to the principalship and culturally responsive leadership similar or different to that of the participants? Does my experience as a principal or graduate student influence my research findings?* Merriam (2002) commented that by practicing reflexivity, the researcher is able to provide clarification, which enables, “the readers to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (p. 26). Creswell (2007) further stated the researcher must be reflective and transparent commenting on internal biases, prejudices, and values that play a role in how the study is approached. I processed through questions of race, gender, and my personal and professional experiences as an African American Female High School Principal.

Researcher Perspective

As the interviewer, I wanted to make sure that I was ethical but still had the ability to create a comfortable environment where the women felt at ease speaking freely as data was collected for the study. During interviews, I was also mindful of my own personal and professional experiences that led to my leadership role. I used reflexivity related to my experiences as an African American Female High School Principal. I chose to study African American Female High School Principals based on personal and professional experiences. Approximately two years ago, I was selected as the first African American principal (Kindergarten through high school) in a district that was established in 1899. My experiences as a woman, mother, educator, graduate student, and an African American have been instrumental in my work to serve students and schools; at the same time my experiences as an African American Female High School Principal has also caused me to question the educational system and those who may or may not have similar experiences to mine.

I acknowledge I bring my own perspectives within this study as an African American female principal and current PhD candidate. As a previous research participant in a study on culturally responsive leadership I carry my own definition of what it means to be a culturally responsive leader. Similarly, as a woman of color in this role, I was conscious that I had the potential to have similar experiences and perspectives to those I interviewed. I also requested the assistance of a doctoral colleague who could speak to both my professional and personal sides. I applied reflexivity while analyzing

the data and providing the findings; my reflexive voice comes at the end of each case, the cross-case analysis, and the discussion.

Summary

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) reiterated that phenomenology is an “attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations” (p. 25). As I conducted this phenomenological case study I sought to understand the participant’s experiences and the meanings associated with them. Merriam (2002) stated “qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding...and the end product being richly descriptive” (p.178-179). With this phenomenological case study I was able to describe the data collection process and the analysis concluding the research process. This assisted in (a) examining the perspectives and experiences of four African American female principals in Texas related to their challenges with race and gender and (b) applying Womanist theory to the experiences of these principals while exploring if their journey led them to be culturally responsive leaders. The data analysis process ensured I was able to analyze the data and identify themes, patterns, and commonalities to illustrate the phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas as the initial phase of this study. In this chapter, I discuss the perspectives and experiences that emerged from the questionnaire data from African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas. Using a phenomenological approach, I conducted a qualitative study in two different phases. Phase I will be addressed in this chapter and Phase II will be addressed in chapters V through VIII. In Phase I, I sent an open-ended questionnaire to 59 of the 76 African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas. Upon collecting the data through questionnaires, I found that some principals were no longer in their current positions or their contact information was inaccurate. I received 17 responses from principals across the varying districts (major urban, major suburban, other central city, other central city suburban, non-metropolitan: stable, and charter). My response expectation was 15%; however, approximately 29% of the 59 African American Female High School Principals in Texas responded to the questionnaire.

Discussion of Findings

The findings for this study are presented in three different stages. In the first stage, I present the findings of Phase I from the open-ended questionnaire and discuss the significant perspectives and experiences of these principals. In the second stage,

discussed in Chapters V through VIII, I share the significant findings of Phase II from each interview with a phenomenological analysis as described by Hycner (1985) in the form of case studies. In the final stage, discussed in Chapter IX, I present a cross-case analysis of both the open-ended questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

Phase I: Presentation of Open-Ended Questionnaire

In the open-ended questionnaire, I asked the principals nine qualitative questions. The following nine questions framed the findings for Stage I.

1. Please describe the characteristics of an African American Female High School Principals.
2. How long have you been in administration? What specific positions and how long?
3. How have your experiences as a female impacted you as a high school principal?
4. How have your experiences as an African American impacted you as a high school principal?
5. What are some challenges you have faced as an African American Female High School Principals?
6. What characteristics make up your leadership behaviors?
7. What are external forces that have impacted your leadership?
8. How has the organization of the district and the campus impacted your leadership?

9. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with your superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?

I analyzed all of the returned open-ended questionnaires to identify themes of general meaning as described by Hycner (1985). In the following tables, I present themes in the form of collective experiences, as well as a discussion of each table.

Collective Experience: Characteristics of African American Female High School Principals

Of the 17 responses, 16 answered the question regarding the characteristics of African American Female High School Principals. The responses of the principals are listed verbatim in Figure 4.

Question 1. Please describe the characteristics of an African American Female High School Principals.

1. Relational, strategic, resourceful, attitude of servitude, tough decision maker, provide an atmosphere of learning, make choices
 2. Knowledgeable
 3. Strong, hardworking, caring, knowledgeable
 4. Strong, Visionary, Organized, Detailed, Articulate
 5. Enthusiastic, competent, assertive, capable, outgoing, determined, organized, inspirational, effective communicator, planner
 6. I think the characteristics vary by individual not race; however I am straight forward, a good communicator; visionary; listener; cheerleader; creative thinker
 7. Resilient; intelligent; hard-working; articulate
 8. Visionary, confident, knowledgeable, coachable, innovative
 9. I believe we are confident, strong minded, outspoken, self-assured
 10. Determined, compassionate, intelligent, humble
 11. Resourceful, optimistic, creative, energetic
 12. Intelligent, compassionate, strict yet motherly, encouraging yet firm, ethical
 13. Not sure that I can identify different characteristics
 14. Hard worker, politically savvy, flexible, chameleon
 15. Assertive, dedicated, adaptable, mover and shaker
 16. Passionate about what you do, similar to a teacher. Enjoy working with kids and want to make a bigger impact. Christian. Strong faith. Us as a people have this attribute. Strong. Willing to stand by yourself and take the risk on what is best for kids. Be able to work with all kids and people on your campus. Parents, teachers, etc.
-

Figure 4. C E of General Meaning for Characteristics of African American Female High School Principals

Background and Demographics

The principals' descriptions of African American Female High School Principals aligns with the attributes brought forth through the literature review. As stated by Roane and Newcomb (2013) African American principals represent approximately 11% of principals; however, when considering race and gender, Wrushen and Sherman (2008) confirmed the numbers decrease even more. Wrushen and Sherman further stated the

rarity of women as secondary school principals is a phenomenon in itself. Reed (2012) echoed the same findings by stating there are only a small number of African American female leaders in education. Many of the women shared their characteristics of African American female principals and stated race and gender do play a large part in the principal role.

Collective Experience: Length of Time in Administration

After asking the principals to describe the characteristics of an African American Female High School Principals they were asked to share their length of time as administrators. Figure 5 illustrates their years of experience and various leadership roles.

Question 2. How long have you been in administration? What specific positions and how long?	
<hr/>	
1.	17 years
2.	16 years: 1 year asst principal, 7 years Dean of Instruction (Associate Principal), 8 years High School Principal
3.	11.5 years, both an AP and a Principal
4.	4 years principal, 1 year assistant principal, 7 years central office staff (Science Department coach and Supervisor)
5.	13 years: 5 years asst principal, 3 years Dean of Instruction, 5 years Principal
6.	11 years: 7 years asst principal, 4 principal
7.	11 years: 5 years Principal, 2.5 Associate principal, 3.5 asst principal
8.	16 years: Educational Asst, Asst Principal, Principal
9.	5 years principal, 2 years asst principal
10.	12 years principal, 3 years asst principal, 16 years director
11.	3 years principal, 6 years asst principal
12.	9 years: 3 years principal, 4 years Associate principal, 2 years asst
13.	5 years principal, 3 years Dean, 2 years district instructional specialist
14.	5 years, Academic associate principal and principal
15.	17 years: 4 years asst principal, 2 years associate principal, 11 years principal
16.	4 years principal, 3 years AP, 3 years associate principal, 2 summer school asst principal
17.	20 years: AP, director, principal

Figure 5. C E for Length of time in Administration

Figure 6 shows the number of years of experience for each administrator in five year increments.

Length of Time in Administration				
1 – 5 Years	6 – 10 Years	11 – 15 Years	16 – 20 Years	21 – or more
2	3	6	5	1

Figure 6. African American Female High School Principals Length of Time in Administration

The African American Female High School Principals who took part in the questionnaire shared a wide range of experiences. A majority of the participants had at least 11 years of experience in administration with a majority of them serving between 11 and 20 years. The principals also shared their positions preceding their appointment to their principalship. Many of the women served as assistant principals, Deans of Instruction, and Central Office members before taking on the role of principal.

Collective Experience: Gender in the High School Principalship

In the open-ended questionnaire, I asked the principals to share their experiences related to being a Female High School Principal. Figure 7 lists their responses to the question. The answers below are verbatim.

Question 3. How have your experiences as a female impacted you as a high school principal?

1. Allowed me some opportunities to network with others, create opportunities for others, as well as provided me a platform to advance quality of life for students.
2. I'm at a comprehensive high school with an all-female admin team and the underlying attitude of district leadership is that an all-female team at the secondary is not good and there must be a "strong" male on the admin team. As a female high school principal I do way more work than my male counterparts who have "strong" women with talent and experience to do all of their menial tasks, reports, emails, etc.
3. As a mother, I am more compassionate and caring with parents and my students. I think being a female gives me the ability to see all sides of a situation. Life isn't just black and white...I live in the gray areas.
4. I am challenged to the point often of having to prove myself more than other colleagues I am not interested in typing details but I would be more than willing to provide some anecdotal examples by phone xxx-xxx-xxxx cell, or xxx-xxx-xxxx
5. Not to my knowledge; however, I am aware that in at least two instances I was not selected for promotions. White males were selected in both instances.
6. I am more maternal
7. It is my experience as a mother more so than simply being a female that has had the more profound impact. When you understand the hopes, dreams and fears that a parent-especially a mother- has for a child, you're able to understand what a parent may not be able to articulate.
8. Because I have worked more years in a school setting that was predominantly at-risk students, the experiences has prepared me to implement my vision in a more concrete and consistent manner. I am able to identify and address challenges early on and develop an implementation plan for them.
9. My experience as a female principal has made me a better leader. As a female, we have to be careful how we speak when address staff or the public. Women leaders are often misunderstand when demonstrating compassion. When giving orders or directives to those who are out of compliance, our tone and body language can be misinterpreted. There are many factors as a female leaders that can be viewed as a negative if we are not careful or trained.
10. As a female HS principal, one must be determined, able to make decisions instantly yet skillful enough to remain compassionate and humble.
11. Perception of others seeking resolution is that a male is final authority.

Figure 7. C E for Experiences as a Female High School Principal

12. As a female it's been more difficult to work with my superiors than it has with my subordinates, students and parents. I think it's been an advantage with students and parents, because it's hard to find people who have had bad relationships with their mothers. An underlying respect for women is deeply embedded in the souls of the American culture...beginning with Lady Liberty. I think I have just enough empathy and just enough tough to be firm, loving and consistent at all times. The most overt difference is working for a male superintendent v. a female. Superintendency as an over generalization if you will, is an egotistical position. Most who hold this position think very highly of themselves on the surface. The male sups that I've worked with would get more offended when their ego was challenged than when their intelligence and experiences were challenged. I've learned as a woman to play that game...the ego stroking game. My old principal when I was an associate used to say, you have to master the art of making them think it was their idea. I've gotten really good at this. The sad part is because that was a gift, I think they overlooked my intelligence and inherent skill to move people, curriculum and systems. Working for women, I'm excited to say, that my work is more about the work and not about how wonderful and powerful I make them feel. THAT feels good. It's certainly more challenging but if we are not in this to grow and help others grow, then we are not in this for the right reason!
13. People treat women much differently than a man. I believe that many things I have to say or redirect wouldn't even happen if I were a man. Currently, I am very blessed to have a strong team, however, it took a while to get everyone on board. I believe without doubt, that employees do more for a man, and sooner. It took a long time to get my team on board.
14. They have made me stronger
15. Yes
16. Early on it is different compared to when you have been in it for a longer period of time. Have to observe. Roles change after time. I am bolder than when I first started. Still trying to learn in the role too.
17. Relates to my interaction with my children and grandchildren.

Figure 7 Continued

With these responses, I collected and clustered the statements into three themes that were prevalent throughout their responses. The themes of (a) gender inequity, (b) relational capacity as a mother, and (c) work ethic emerged.

Gender inequity. Seven of the principals spoke to specific situations where being female directly impacted them when compared to their male counterparts. One principal shared the perception of why there should not be an all-female administrative team at a comprehensive high school. “The underlying attitude of district leadership is that an all-female team at the secondary (level) is not good and there must be a ‘strong’ male on the admin team.” Another principal echoed a similar sentiment by stating, “I am challenged to the point often of having to prove myself more than other colleagues.” And yet another confirmed that the, “perception of others seeking resolution is that a male is the final authority.” Several examples were shared of how male counterparts are seen as superior to females even when in the same position. This was reiterated when a principal stated, “People treat women much differently than a man. I believe that many things I have to say or redirect wouldn’t even happen if I were a man.” Many of the women spoke of having to work harder and prove themselves to their peers and superiors even in their current roles.

Relational capacity as a mother. Six of the African American Female High School Principals spoke to their roles as mothers being instrumental in their leadership. “It is my experience as a mother more so than simply being a female that has had the more profound impact. When you understand the hopes, dreams, and fears that a parent- especially a mother- has for a child, you’re able to understand what a parent may not be

able to articulate.” Another principal also commented, “As a mother, I am more compassionate and caring with parents and my students. I think being a female gives me the ability to see all sides of a situation.” These principals pointed out that they are more “maternal” with their leadership and their experiences simply, “relate to my interactions with my children and grandchildren.” As shared by these principals, their role of principal is not only impacted by being a female but by living as a mother.

Work ethic. Many of the women shared they use their personal and professional experiences with race and gender as a catalyst for the work they perform as females. Seven of the principals spoke specifically to the challenges they have experienced and how they have made them stronger leaders. One principal simply stated, I am bolder than when I first started’. While another shared, “As a female HS principal, one must be determined, able to make decisions instantly yet (be) skillful enough to remain compassionate and humble.” Another principal wrote, “My experiences as a female principal has made me a better leader.” Many of the female principals expressed the same sentiments, one captured the following thought, “As a female high school principal I do way more work than my male counterparts.” The underlying theme that women have to work harder and empathize in their roles as principal was evident throughout the principal responses.

Collective Experience: Race in the High School Principalship

Sixteen of the principals shared their experiences as a principal and how race relates to their experiences. Figure 8 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 4. How have your experiences as an African American impacted you as a high school principal?

1. Understand the limitations and boundaries that surround me. Allowed me to look at things through a different set of lenses.
2. I have uniquely had only positive experiences as an African American so there is not an impact (that I'm aware of) that my race has had on the principalship.
3. I can withstand the pressure. I expect to be doubted, criticized and questioned. I am just prepared for it instead of being shocked by it.
4. No Answer
5. Not that I am directly aware of; however, I have had to deal with some personnel issues that my race may have influenced for whatever reason.
6. It has been more difficult in my current environment.
7. It allows me to understand the minority perspective and speak to issues and minority parents in a way that a Caucasian principals may not be able to.
8. My experience has allowed me to view the educational environment more globally. I have been afforded opportunities on a district level that helped me to understand the workings of a district as a whole.
9. As an African American principal, I find myself explaining my purpose. I have to prove that my knowledge is legit and not just "street talk." As an African American female in a leadership role, I have to document, verify, and observe my environment. Why? Because I am an African American female that is watched by Caucasians, Hispanics, and other African Americans.
10. It impacts all facets of education. I think it's an advantage. I can relate with more populations/ people.
11. As an AA I've learned a lot about the soul of human beings. I understand biases. I have a better understanding that there are just some people who will not hear what I have to say because of the color of my skin, so there are times when I have other administrator's present information or deal with certain parents. I understand disparities in resources, so I work hard and almost overcompensate for minority children. I also understand how hard AA's have to work to achieve and so in a sense I am harder on minority children as far as what I expect of them.

Figure 8. C E for Experiences as an African American High School Principal

12. It has only made me stronger and has taught me a lot about people. I was judged immediately. The very day I met them, I was nothing but polite and friendly. Many judgements got back to me immediately.
13. They make me aware and always alert
14. To fight harder. I call myself an "avenger" I fight the evils of education every day
15. I don't look at it as an AA. I want to do best by kids. My AA kids look up to me and my AP (AA) as role models. People tried to figure her out and they found she is there for kids. There is a perception out there about Black women. Loud. Mean. Stereotypes. We get clumped together.
16. Relates to my experiences in schools and in universities.

Figure 8 Continued

All of the principals shared their experiences relating to being an African American High School Principal. Based off of the response data collected I clustered the statements into three themes that were prevalent throughout their responses. The themes from their answers included (a) the expectation to be judged, (b) the notion to continually prove themselves, and, (c) an expanded perspective in relation to others.

Expectation of judgement. Six of the principals explicitly stated that in their current positions they expected to be judged because of being an African American. One succinctly stated, "I expect to be doubted, criticized and questioned. I am just prepared for it instead of being shocked by it." This reoccurring theme is a norm in their current roles where they are often judged before even having the opportunity to serve. One principal shared, "I understand biases. I have a better understanding that there are just some people who will not hear what I have to say because of the color of my skin, so there are times when I have other administrators' present information or deal with certain parents."

Another principal magnified the point by commenting, “There is a perception out there about Black women. Loud. Mean. Stereotypes. We get clumped together.” These comments and perceptions were experienced on a daily basis in their roles as high school principals.

Prove themselves. At the same time these principals commented that they always have to prove themselves to their stakeholders. One principal shared, “As an African American principal, I find myself explaining my purpose. I have to prove that my knowledge is legit and not just ‘street talk’. As an African American female in a leadership role, I have to document, verify, and observe my environment. Why? Because I am an African American female that is watched by Caucasians, Hispanics, and other African Americans.” There was the notion of consistently having to show credibility and work harder just to garner the same respect as their counterparts. One principal added, “I fight harder. I call myself an ‘avenger’.” The emphasis on having to prove themselves and work harder is a natural part of their respective leadership styles. The notion of having to prove themselves in the role of high school principal is impacted by the color of their skin.

Expanded perspective. Several of the principals mentioned they have experienced multiple perspectives as African American high school principals. For instance, one principal shared, I “understand the limitations and boundaries that surround me.” They have “allowed me to look at things through a different set of lenses.” Another principal added, my race as an African American, “allows me to understand the minority perspectives and speak to issues and minority parents in a way that a Caucasian principal may not be able to.” As stated by another principal, “My experience has allowed me to

view the educational environment more globally.” Another principal echoed a similar response by adding, my experiences, “impacts all facets of education. I think it’s an advantage. I can relate with more populations/people.” Many of the principals shared that their experiences as African American principals added depth to their experiences as principals.

Collective Experience: Challenges as African American Female High School Principals

Approximately 16 of the principals shared their challenges they have experienced as African American Female High School Principals. Figure 9 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 5. What are some challenges you have faced as an African American Female High School Principals?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of respect and inequity 2. African female high school principals are relegated to the magnet schools or comprehensive high schools with under 800 students. There currently no African American female district level leaders above the principalship that were promoted from a high school. I feel I have pretty much hit the ceiling for advancement in my district. 3. Doubt - in my ability to lead, my knowledge, my experience 4. No Answer 5. I sometimes believe that I work much harder than some of my counterparts. I have a perception that I must work faster, longer, harder and be smarter. 6. People are not used being held accountable; I don't avoid confrontation and people are used to someone who bends a LOT more than I do. I am also not a politician. I love every student not just those that have financial resources. 7. Genuine surprise and shock when people meet me. Lack of respect and condescending behaviors. The belief that I am there for only the poor and minority students. Lack of opportunities to network.

Figure 9. C E for Challenges faced as an African American Female High School Principal

8. Moving teachers toward a mindset of understanding the whole child and not just the academics. My challenges have been targeted around changing the culture and expectations of a campus that has been used to having a predominantly white staff for predominantly minority students.
9. My challenges has been mostly with other African American employees. The color of my skin does not mean I am "ghetto and lack intelligence." I am confident in my skin, and I am knowledgeable. Yet, I find when another race is speaking next to me or after me, people tend to listen and believe more because it was not stated by an African American female.
10. Being African American.
11. Although I've worked with parents who refused to work with me and would only be addressed by my (at the time) white male assistant principal, the hardest part of my role while serving as an AA female is the dealing with the "way" my employees and supervisors receive me. Many teachers are offended when I offer feedback. I understand being hurt but there is almost this sense of: you can't tell me what to do or what do YOU know about instruction. I am also amazed at the level of overt defiance with simple rules like: no tennis shoes unless it's jean day. No jeans unless it's jean day. I've had teacher wear jeggins the next day and argue with me that they were not jeans. I'm amazed at the number of times that I've had to say "write your objective on the board EVERY DAY" and it doesn't happen. I know for a fact that I've received more grievances than my white and Hispanic counterparts all of which were dead end. Although I can't prove this, I often believe that it is because many people simply do not like being told what to do by an AA female.
12. I truly believe that I have faced more judgement and it took a while longer for people to get on board. I believe I was expected to "hang-out" personally, have drinks, etc, etc, without even knowing people and I just don't do that. I was nothing but cordial and respectful to everyone, yet it wasn't enough. They truly wanted me to bend over backwards to get to know them.
13. I have to show and prove
14. Racism sexism / left out/ criticized for my opinion/ ridiculed to the point of having a glass ceiling
15. I'm tougher on my AA kids (previous question). Invest in them. People come and talk to her and she does not identify herself as the principal. Then they figure out she is and they are like who...? She graduated from the high school she is the principal. Sometimes she just gets the look. Current example of UIL realignment and the look of who are you and what are you doing in here? Always the only one. Usually White males and maybe a white female.
16. Differences in skill set of students depending on previous home or school environment

Figure 9 Continued

The principals shared their experiences relating to challenges they faced as African American Female High School Principals. Based off of the response data collected I clustered the statements into three themes that were prevalent throughout their responses. The emerging themes from their answers included (a) the actions of being disrespected, (b) lack of credibility even with the title of principal, and (c) desire to strengthen accountability with their campuses.

Disrespect. When asked about their challenges related to serving as an African American Female High School Principals there was a unified expression of disrespect showed to the principals. One principal simply stated there is a “lack of respect and inequity” in her position as principal. Another alluded to the fact that there are people who literally, “doubt...my ability to lead, my knowledge, [and] my experience.” Another principal shared that although disrespect comes from outside of her race there is some disrespect that comes from other African Americans. “My challenges has been mostly with other African American employees. The color of my skin does not mean I am ‘ghetto and lack intelligence’. I am confident in my skin, and I am knowledgeable. Yet, I find when another race is speaking next to me or after me, people tend to listen and believe [them] more because it was not stated by an African American female.” Another principal expounded on this thought stating there is, “genuine surprise and shock when people meet me.” There is a, “lack of respect and condescending behaviors.” There is a reoccurring theme that these women should not or could not be in the role of high school principal.

Credibility. Many of the women pointed out that although they are faced with this disrespect they often times lack credibility with their stakeholders as well. A principal

shared the following, “Although I’ve worked with parents who refused to work with me and would only be addressed by my (at the time) white male assistant principals, the hardest part of my role while serving as an AA female is the dealing with the ‘way’ my employees and supervisors receive me. Many teachers are offended when I offer feedback. I understand being hurt but there is almost this sense of, ‘you can’t tell me what to do or what do YOU know about instruction.” The experience of being the principal but not being credible because of being an African American female resonated throughout the responses of the principals. This principal further shared, “I know for a fact that I’ve received more grievances than my white and Hispanic counterparts all of where were a dead end. Although I can’t prove this, I often believe that it is because many people simply do not like being told what to do by an AA female.” A similar thought was shared by another principal who stated, “I truly believe that I have faced more judgement and it took a while longer for people to get on board. I was nothing but cordial and respectful to everyone, yet it wasn’t enough. They truly want me to bend over backwards to get to know them.” This lack of credibility poses a stumbling block and contributes to the glass ceiling some of the principals spoke about. One principal shared her challenges include, “racism, sexism, [being] left out, criticized for my opinion, ridiculed to the point of having a glass ceiling.” Another principal added, “African American high school principals are relegated to the magnet schools or comprehensive high schools with under 800 students. There are currently no African American female district level leaders above the principalship that were promoted from a high school. I feel I have pretty much hit the ceiling for

advancement in my district.” These principals shared their challenges related to credibility as African American Female High School Principals.

Accountability. Several of the principals spoke to trying to provide accountability in their roles as principal. One principal shared the following experience, “People are not used [to] being held accountable; I don’t avoid confrontation and people are used to someone who bends a LOT more than I do. I am also not a politician.” This challenge is a similar experience felt by other principals. Another principal shared, I am “moving teachers toward a mindset of understanding the whole child and not just the academics. My challenges have been targeted around changing the culture and expectations of a campus that has been used to having a predominately white staff for predominately minority students.” Many of the principals shared experiences of providing accountability for their faculty, staff, and students in the midst of issues with race and gender. In trying to lead and serve the campus there is the question of authority due to the race and gender of being an African American Female High School Principals.

Collective Experience: Characteristics of Leadership Behavior

16 of the principals shared their idea of what characteristics make up their leadership behaviors. Figure 10 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 6. What characteristics make up your leadership behaviors?

1. Voice, choice, attitude, learner
 2. Organized, Motivating, Big Picture Minded
 3. Considering all sides, compassionate, having high expectations of all, follow through/follow up with staff, listening
 4. No Answer
 5. I consider myself to be a servant leader. My goal is the success of my teacher thus ensuring the success of my students
 6. I believe that I have a participatory leadership style. I believe in building sustainable leadership capacity so I build others. I am also a servant leader. I expect the staff to do anything that I don't want to do.
 7. Extreme drive for excellence; willingness to do any job; inspire! Recognize and reward; mentorship and support of talent; articulation of a vision; strategic planning based on the vision; team orientation
 8. I am a visionary and transformational leader. I believe in being "all in" for kids. Role modeling the culture and expectations needed plays a large part in transforming complacent campuses. I will take risk and say what others are afraid to say. Passion is a must.
 9. Optimistic, Bold, Peaceful, Strong-minded
 10. It varies depending on the situation. However, I think I am more democratic. I like to dialogue when time permits.
 11. Optimistic, resilient, builder,
 12. Grit. I work from 4:30AM - 8/10PM every day. I work weekends; through lunch; etc. Community. I know every teacher on my campus' personal background. I know their children at least by name, I know their life partners and hobbies. Collaboration. I do not make decisions without at least 3 key players at the table. This is my number one rule. We are a team. Communication. Although this is a deficit of mine, I work hard to be as transparent as possible.
 13. Focused on students, goal-oriented, consistent, fair, respectful, collaborative
 14. Patience, flexible. good listener, fair, positive
 15. Caring. Firm and fair. Relationships. Christian. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Model my leadership so that other people will follow.
 16. Collegial, trusting, collaborative, growth mindset, instructional leader, management style
-

Figure 10. C E for Characteristics of Leadership Behaviors

The principals shared the characteristics that make up their leadership behaviors as African American Female High School Principals. Based off of the response data collected I clustered the statements into three themes that were prevalent throughout their

responses. The themes from their answers included (a) visionary, (b) caring and community, as well as (c) building capacity.

Visionary. Six of the principals spoke to setting a vision and caring it out in their respective schools. One principal commented, “I am a visionary and transformational leader. I believe in being ‘all in’ for kids. Role modeling the culture and expectations needed plays a large part in transforming complacent campuses. Passion is a must.” The attributes were common throughout the responses on leadership behaviors. Another principal shared that as the principal there must be an, “articulation of a vision [as well as] strategic planning based on the vision” to lead a campus. Yet, another principal stated that African American Female principals have to be, “Big Picture Minded” able to see all things from various perspectives to serve the students and teachers they lead.

Caring and community. Another set of characteristics that emerged were that of an attitude of caring and one of community. Again, six of the principals shared similar characteristics that spoke to being ‘compassionate while having high expectations’ for everyone on the campus. Another principal added, I am “caring, [yet] firm and fair.” A principal listed the notion of “listening” to show that they care for their staff and they “consider all sides” when leading. In relation to building a community one principal shared, “I know every teacher on my campus’ personal background. I know their children at least by name, I know their life partners and hobbies.” Another principal spoke to building community when she stated, “Collaboration. I do not make decisions without at least 3 key players at the table. This is my number one rule. We are a team.” Several of

the qualities shared whether “peaceful” or “positive” spoke to the desire to create a caring environment with a sense of community.

Building capacity. Lastly, the ladies gave multiple examples of building capacity within their campuses. This theme resonated with a majority of the principals who provided responses. “I believe in building sustainable leadership capacity so I build others.” This was a crucial characteristic to her leading style. Another principal stated I have an, “extreme drive for excellence; willingness to do any job; Inspire! [I] recognize and reward [as well as provide] mentorship and support of talent.” There is a reoccurring theme to invest into the people they serve and lead. One principal simply listed I am, “optimistic, resilient, [and a] builder. The principals shared a desire to build and prepare their faculty and staff in the midst of leading their respective campuses.

Collective Experience: External Forces that Impact Leadership

16 of the principals shared their external forces that have impacted their leadership as African American Female High School Principals. Figure 11 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 7. What are external forces that have impacted your leadership?

1. Family, friends, colleagues
2. The pressure of the accountability system and the increased rigor of the state exams has forced me to focus more on "meeting standard" than the whole child.
3. Parental expectations, district personnel input, society
4. No Answer
5. Positive impacts come from continued professional development and ongoing learning.
6. My political arena.
7. Extreme faith in God and his plan to use me to positively impact lives. I believe every difficulty and every triumph has been an experience/lesson to be used to help and encourage others.
8. Additional activities that I am a part of and provide leadership to. Educational mentors who challenge me.
9. I am not sure if external forces impact my leadership. If I had to choose an external factor, I would have to say central office.
10. My faith and family.
11. Limited resources, perception/misconception
12. My family is the main outside force that impacts my leadership. My family comes before anyone else's. I drop my work at the drop of a dime if there is any situation that has to do with my own children. My superintendent has a huge impact on my leadership. She has never been a principal, and doesn't fully understand what it means to run a school and "lead" people v. manage people. However, she's the boss and has to be appeased. The challenge is pleasing her while staying true to my servant leadership style.
13. Sometimes district initiatives, budget
14. Politics
15. The way I was raised and the model that was in front of me. People in her community when I was brought up. They paved the way but never had a chance. My mom, grandmother. Stakeholders that I work with have impacted leadership, good and bad.
16. Politics

Figure 11. C E for External Forces that Impact Leadership

The principals shared the external forces that have impacted their leadership as African American Female High School Principals. Based off of the response data collected I clustered the statements into three themes that were prevalent throughout their responses.

The emerging themes from their responses included their (a) family, (b) district, and (c) surroundings.

Family. When asked about external factors that influence their leadership approximately four of the principals shared their faith made a difference in how they lead. One principal simply listed, “family, friends, and colleagues.” Another principal delve in and shared, “The way I was raised and the model that was in front of me. People in my community when I was brought up. They paved the way but never had a chance. My mom, grandmother.” There was a sense of thankfulness and appreciation for opening the door for her to serve in her current role as principal. Another spoke of her immediate family as an external force, “My family is the main outside force that impacts my leadership. My family comes before anyone else’s. I drop my work at the drop of a dime if there is any situation that has to do with my own children.” Many of the principals shared the impact their immediate and extended families on their roles as principals. These example shed light on the dual role female principals hold while maintaining their families.

District. Eight of the principals shared about the external force of their respective districts. The principals have an obligation to serve their campuses but are always responsible to their districts and state expectations. “The pressure of the accountability system and the increased rigor of the state exams has forced me to focus more on ‘meeting standard’ than the whole child.” Another principal commented on the district as an external factor when she shared, “central office” and another stated, “district personnel input” as well as one principal responded, “My superintendent has a huge impact on my leadership. She has never been a principal, and doesn’t fully understand what it means to

run a school and ‘lead’ people v. manage people. However, she’s the boss and has to be appeased. The challenge is pleasing her while staying true to my servant leadership style.” There are various levels of the district that impact the leadership of an African American Female High School Principals.

Surroundings. Lastly, the external forces of surroundings came forward as a theme. Surroundings meant different things to different principals. One principal shared the list of such external forces as, “parental expectation, district personnel input, [and] society.” Two shared that professional development positively impacts their leadership because it provides continuous learning. Three principals simply listed “politics” as an external force that plays a part in their leadership. Another principal shared that “perceptions and misconceptions” impact her leadership in the role of principal. There are multiple external forces that contribute to the leadership of African American Female High School Principals on a daily basis.

Collective Experience: District and Campus Impact on Leadership

16 of the principals shared how the organization of the district and the campus impacts their leadership as African American Female High School Principals. Figure 12 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 8. How has the organization of the district and the campus impacted your leadership?

1. Enhanced and restricted depending on the situation.
2. I have not grown much professionally under the organization system of reporting to Executive Directors who supervise 7 - 12 principals. The expectations vary from Executive Director to Executive Director. This creates communication and
3. High schools are such large organizations. There are so many layers of people to deal with. I have to keep everyone in the loop of communication. Having 5 APs allows me to see a lot of what takes place through my meetings and communication with them.
4. No Answer
5. I ensure that our campus vision and mission is in alignment with our district mission and vision
6. None at all
7. The size of my campus had forced me to really mentor and work with my assistant and associate so that we are all in line with our mission and vision. Team is even more important because the ethic of who we are as an organization cannot rest in my physical presence or words alone.
8. We have a great superintendent who models the expectations and is student centered. He provides us with tools through the district leadership team that has helped me to be a better leader on my campus.
9. For me, district has not been my biggest supporter. Most of my challenges are with the district because I follow policies and procedures and I do not allow them to define me. I was created by God, and he ordained me and He chose me. Therefore, I follow His will and do what is right in His sight. I am not influenced by others. My soul means more to me than man.
10. Our District Leadership is supportive and my staff have a sense of belonging.
11. I'm more of a risk taker, choosing to make decisions that are good for campus and then seeking permission.
12. 2.5 years ago I walked into a district with literally no systems. For example, 3 principals asked what the employee transfer protocol is and each of us were given a different story. When I walked on to my campus we were out of compliance in advanced academics, ESL, GT, and at risk. I was told: don't worry about that, TEA doesn't care about little schools like us. No systems, no staffing to support systems and a culture of mediocrity all fighting against "ethics" and "experience." I know what's possible in schools and what we are capable of doing. Because of staffing, I've had to take on responsibilities that are not really that of the principal. This takes away from my ability to lead, monitor and focus on curriculum.

Figure 12. C E for District and Campus Impact on Leadership

13. Being part of a large district can be frustrating when you need support. Our district officials change frequently, and that lack of consistency can be difficult.
14. Fortunately I get a lot of support. There is a clear organizational chart, but there is also an open door to any office. I try to use this same approach in my school.
15. District. I was given this opportunity. On this campus I have been deliberate to make sure that everyone knows the building does not make the school we do! I have had to lead campus through the opening of the new high school. Investment into faculty and staff.
16. Change in district leadership.

Figure 12 Continued

The principals shared how the organization of the district and the campus they serve has impacted their leadership as African American Female High School Principals. The results of the response data collected brought forth the clustered statements into two themes that were prevalent throughout their responses. The themes of (a) challenges as principals and also (b) their experiences with team work.

Challenging. Approximately six of the principals alluded to challenges they have encountered through the organization of the district and campus related to their leadership. For instance, one principal stated, “I have not grown much professionally under the organization system of reporting to Executive Directors who supervise 7-12 principals. The expectations vary from Executive Director to Executive director [which] creates communication” issues within the organization. At the same time, another principal shared their experience is, “enhanced and restricted depending on the situation” they are dealing with within the district. One other principal shared, “For me, district has not been my

biggest supporter. Most of my challenges are with the district because I follow policies and procedures and I do not allow them to define me.” Yet, another principal added, “Being part of a large district can be frustrating when you need support. Our district officials change frequently, and that lack of consistency can be difficult.” Through the challenges faced one of the principals shared that her district was lacking systems when she entered and there is the perception of not having to worry about TEA due to size. There are, “no systems, no staffing to support systems and a culture of mediocrity all fighting against ‘ethics’ and ‘experience’.” She further continued, “I know what’s possible in schools and what we are capable of doing. Because of staffing, I’ve had to take on responsibilities that are not really that of a principal. This takes away from my ability to lead, monitor and focus on curriculum.” Many of the principals shared experiences with challenges within their respective districts as well as within the system of education. Although the principals were complimentary of their respective districts there are challenges they face as they follow the direction of the district and lead their campuses.

Teamwork. The experiences of eight of the principals spoke to the aspects of modeling, support, and the team. For instance, one principal stated, “We have a great superintendent who models the expectations and is student centered. He provides us with tools through the district leadership team that has helped me to be a better leader on my campus.” Another principal added, “Fortunately I get a lot of support. There is a clear organizational chart, but there is also an open door to any office. I try to use this same approach in my school.” In response to her campus a principal pointed out, “The size of my campus has forced me to really mentor and work with my assistant and associate so

that we are all in line with our mission and vision. Team is even more important because the ethic of who we are as an organization cannot rest in my physical presence or words alone.” Another principal stated in regards to her district, “I was given this opportunity. On this campus I have been deliberate to make sure that everyone knows the building does not make the school we do!” Several of the structures of the district impact the leadership of the principals on their respective campuses.

Collective Experience: Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs

15 of the principals shared their experiences on how their values, attitudes, and beliefs impact their leadership and their relations to their superiors and those they work with in their role as principal. Figure 13 reflects their responses to the question. All answers are verbatim.

Question 9. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with your superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?

1. They have helped me to see things with my eyes open. They are not necessarily aligned with my superiors. Sometimes we do not see things the same nor take them at face value. There is always the back story to life's situations.
 2. My values, attitudes, beliefs drive my leadership style. I treat people the way I want to be treated. I stay positive despite negativity around me. I am the face of the campus. I have to look like I am in control at all times. I believe my belief system is aligned with my superiors. We all want kids to excel. We all want to do the right things for kids.
 3. No Answer
 4. I am a God fearing individual. I have not accomplished anything on my own without my Lord and personal savior. I am here to serve and support. I lead by setting an example of excellence. Grit, determination and perseverance are all important to me. Yes, they are aligned.
-

Figure 13. C E for Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs on Leadership

5. I believe that all students can learn and we have to be solution focused to do so. My superiors let me be creative and get the job done. They really don't interfere with my job.
6. For the most part. I believe that we all want what is best for children. Where I have questions though are about the beliefs and actions that leadership is willing to take to advance the needs of our Black, Hispanic and poor students.
7. They have impacted me tremendously as my values, attitudes, and beliefs stem from me viewing life as having the opportunity and privilege of impacting and influencing others. They are also connected to my belief in being a person of excellence. Yes they align to my superiors because it is expected in our district that we will provide every student with the opportunity to be successful. For those who work with me, I believe you will hear these words: excellence, transformation and vision
8. I believe my attitude, value and belief are extracted from the bible. If the bible says to love your enemy and pray for those who mistreat you, I do it. If the bible says your work should be unto me, I work unto the Lord and not for man. I am influenced by the word of God. Sometimes, district office is confused by my strong belief because I am not influenced by politics.
9. Your belief system is what make you unique. When you take on a position, I believe there will be some connection when you walk in the door or you will not be the fit that is needed to get the job done.
10. Very much aligned in that we put students first. Teachers often don't agree with student centered decisions
11. My values, attitude and beliefs impact my leadership because I believe that as a young girl (12 yrs old to be exact) I was called to work with teens. I believe that all kids can succeed and that success looks differently depending on God's purpose for each person. My superintendent believes the same although we differ in approach. I appreciate this about her because she challenges me to do better and get better. I'm learning a new leadership style.
12. I am thankful that in my positions, I am able to hold strongly to what I believe for students. I believe my district leaders have similar core values, but they often seem to lose knowledge of what it takes to run a campus.
13. I clearly understand that fair is not always equal. I believe my superiors feel the same way, but there are a few times when I have recognized programs that I think are important or of value to students, that go unnoticed or with little support.
14. Yes because we have a family mindset. We stick together and we are with each other. Model what I expect so that everyone buys in and does the same thing. Lead by example. It is never about it. It is about what is best for the school. This is to improve our campus so we can do what is best for kids.

Figure 13 Continued

15. Use my values, attitude, and beliefs to guide my leadership style. Somewhat but not always. All staff / individuals come with their own perspective (values, attitudes and beliefs)
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Figure 13 Continued

The principals shared how their values, attitudes, and beliefs impact their leadership in relations to their superiors and colleagues. Based off of the response data collected, I clustered the statements into one theme that were prevalent throughout their responses. The principal responses affirmed that values, attitudes, and beliefs impact their leadership in providing alignment for their students.

Alignment for students. The principals all stated that their values, attitudes, and beliefs have a direct impact on their leadership. Several of the principals spoke to the alignment to leadership in their work for serving students. For instance one principal shared, “I believe that all students can learn and we have to be solution focused to do so. My superiors let me be creative and get the job done.” Another one affirmed the same belief stating, “They have impacted me tremendously as my values, attitudes, and beliefs stem from me viewing life as having the opportunity and privilege of impacting and influencing others. They are also connected to my belief in being a person of excellence. Yes they align to my superiors because it is expected in our district that we will provide every student with the opportunity to be successful.” Another principal shared, “My values, attitudes, beliefs drive my leadership style. I treat people the way I want to be treated...I believe my belief system is aligned with my superiors. We all want kids to excel. We all want to do the right things for kids.” At the same time while another principal countered stating that her values, attitudes, and beliefs, “have helped me to see things with

my eyes open. They are not necessarily aligned with my superiors. Sometimes we do not see things the same nor take them at face value. There is always a back story to life's situations." This was reiterated by another principal who had a similar belief. "I am thankful that in my positions, I am able to hold strongly to what I believe for students. I believe my district leaders have similar core values, but they often seem to lose knowledge of what it takes to run a campus." All of the principals shared that their values, attitudes, and beliefs impact their leadership, however, the alignment to superiors and colleagues is dependent on the district and its leadership.

Based off of the responses from the questionnaire four principals were selected to participate in Phase II of this research study. Table 5 illustrates the African American Female High School Principals in the following case study chapters.

Table 5
Four African American Female High School Principals

Principals	District Type	Years of Experience as an Administrator
Tori Stephens	Major Suburban	12
Cherie Townsend	Major Urban	18
Jaime Galloway	Other Central City	18
Shayla Wright	Suburban	9

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I

perceived I may find within the data collected. *As the data from the questionnaires came in, I had the expectation that everyone would want to participate in at least Phase I of the study due to the low percentage of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. I also thought there would be a higher rate of responses since I too am an African American Female High School Principal in Texas. When I collected the questionnaire data I had several thoughts of what I may find during this process such as (a) all of the principals would have experiences or issues with race and gender impacting their leadership because the research I found on African American female principals concluded they would be impacted. At the same time I too have had experiences, both negative and positive, with race and gender as an African American Female High School Principal; (b) I wondered if they would all have similar experiences even though they were in different district types across Texas because the findings within the research I examined alluded to similar experiences regardless of district type or location; and (c) the principals may have been concerned about taking part in the questionnaire since there are a limited number of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. The sheer fact that these women could be identified was a reoccurring wondering in my mind. With the 17 principals who shared, many of the themes were prevalent in my own professional experiences as an African American Female High School Principal. None of the responses shared really surprised me.*

Summary

In Chapter IV I share the lived experiences and perspectives of the 17 African American Female High School Principals in Texas who took part in the online

questionnaire. The responses of the 17 principals came from the varying districts such as major urban, major suburban, other central city, other central city suburban, non-metropolitan: stable, and charter. In Phase I, I found that many of the principals who responded had similar experiences and responses although their answers were submitted anonymously. When using the phenomenological approach to dissect the themes the stories and examples shared had many similarities. There was the reality that being a woman, specifically African American, in the high school principalship is faced with challenges such as gender inequity, disrespect, lack of credibility, an expectation of judgment, and the need to prove themselves due to their race and gender. At the same time the principals shared they are challenged to lead with vision, provide accountability, build capacity, and maintain a strong work ethic because of experiences with race and gender as African American Female High School Principals. The women were open and shared experiences and perspectives that provided insight to the experience as high school principals in the state of Texas. The data collected from the questionnaire laid the foundation for the case studies which will be presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PRINCIPAL TORI STEPHENS

Introduction

In the second phase of this study, I examined four of the African American female principals in Texas related to challenges they may have faced due to their race and gender. I chose four African American Female High School Principals from the following district types, a major suburban, major urban, other central city suburban, and other central city principal to take part in the follow-up semi-structured interview.

This chapter is the first of four case studies regarding African American Female High School Principals in Texas. In the first section of the case study, I present the demographics of the district as shared by TEA. In the second section, I analyzed the interview data of the participant as processed by Hycner (1985). Specifically, according to Hycner (1985) each response will consist of clusters of relevant meaning in which, “the researcher addresses the research question to the units of general meaning to determine whether what the participant has said responds to and illuminates the research question” (p. 284). In this analysis, I describe Principal Tori Stephens’ lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey through the research questions. The story of Principal Stephens was examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership. Tori Stephens and Smithville ISD are pseudonyms for the principal and her district name.

Demographics

Smithville ISD is considered a Major Suburban district as defined by TEA. There are 79 major suburban districts in Texas. Smithville ISD is a district consisting of approximately 48,000 students, 5 high schools, 10 middle schools, 33 elementary schools as well as two alternative learning centers.

Participants in the Study

Tori Stephens is the principal of Inspire High School in Smithville ISD. Her campus consists of approximately 300 students 9-12. The student ethnic demographics are 12% African American, 55% Hispanic, 28% White, 1% Asian, and 3% Two or more race. The teaching population is 70% female and 30% male. The teacher ethnic make-up consists of 4% African American, 22% Hispanic, 66% White, and 8% Asian.

Data Analysis of Principal Stephens Interview

In analyzing the interview data of Stephens, multiple themes emerged in response to the research questions. The themes in relation to the research questions are shared below. This analysis describes Principal Stephens' lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey.

Research Question One: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?

Two clusters of relevant meaning emerged from Principal Stephens interview data in regards to the impact of race in her role of principal. She spoke of her childhood experiences growing up during and after integration and her evolution in responding to peoples' perceptions and stereotypes.

Growing up during and after integration. During the interview Principal Stephens shared several instances where experiences with race impacted her as a principal. The initial experience shared spoke to being raised in the inner-city of Detroit. “I was born and raised in Detroit. This is during the time of bussing – school bussing. It had a huge impact on my life.” She further shared that growing up during that time frame allowed her to see what inequity was from personal experience. She was able to attend a state university, but had to drop out due to family issues. In Detroit, MI “there were a lot of people who didn’t think I could make it this far.” One specific instance she shared that continually stays with her is a professor she experienced her freshman year. “I think if I go back to my professor in math when I first started off, they let me know that I would never make it. I would never make math because I’m Black. I would never make math because women are the weakest in those areas. That was told to me directly by a professor my freshman year...that year marked me.” This comment stayed with her and she used it as fuel to pursue her degree. She spoke of using that instance to work on all the skills necessary to improve her education. Upon returning to college she pursued her degree in math and became a teacher.

Responding to people’s perceptions and stereotypes. While teaching Stephens shared her love of math with students and became curious about administration and was encouraged by her mentor to pursue it. As a current high school principal she says she is frequently judged or has perceptions about her before people even meet her. “I have to in a way, walk a little tightrope because...they’re not used to seeing a Black woman in this position. So oftentimes when I go out into my reception area and they see me, I get that

[reaction].” She went on to expound, “I have to adjust myself appropriately where I’m not taking this personal, and I just think okay, this is my opportunity to show you that I can do this. I can support you.” This is one example of several instances where her race proceeded her position and brought forth perceptions.

Stephens shared another example of where her race related to her role as a principal. “I was presented with a staff member that came to me at one of our schools to say, ‘Please explain to me why Black kids are so loud’. Okay. That was one of those surreal moments that I look back on.” During the interview Stephenson reflected on this moment and continued by sharing, “There was so many things swirling in my mind at that time, and I wanted to know, you know, are you seeking information or are you just promoting a racist viewpoint?” Stephenson used this opportunity to impart knowledge to this individual. She stated that she sat down with the person and shared insight but she also took the time to present this person with literature on the topic and how their perception impacts students of color. “I wanted to let them know in a gracious way that I was offended, but also these are people that are working with our children, and if you have this perspective what are you doing to the kids?” She further commented, “No matter how much she professed that she wasn’t presenting herself in a negative viewpoint, my job was to show her yes, you were. You definitely were.” Although an isolated event, Stephens shared that race comes into play in every aspect of her professional and personal life. She further added that because of her race she is continually aware of her surroundings. “Do I think as a role model I have to live it? Present it? Do I have to be on point in Costco? I do! I can’t be off. I’m in the

community.” She reiterated that she is always looked at critically which plays into how she responds and lives.

Research Question Two: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?

In her role as Principal, Stephens tied race and gender together when she referenced being a Black woman.

Black woman. One defining moment took place resonating with her gender experiences as a high school principal. Stephens shared, “When I first went and became an administrator...they thought, because my voice was light, and I’m a girly female, that I was not going to be effective.” She was specifically asked how she would deal with a ‘six foot football player coming to her office for a discipline issue’. She responded, “I’ll discipline him just like I disciplined my brothers.” She went further to share that there is a belief that you have to fit a certain persona or a profile. She was clear in pointing out that she is far from the ideal. “I’m not one that’s going to scream and yell, or anything else. That’s not the way.” She stressed the need to know her students and build relationships with them. This method has assisted in her role as principal.

Referencing her womanhood Stephens shared an experience about being passed over for an administration position. She stated that gender has been a barrier in her career towards becoming a principal. “I was passed over one year to be an assistant principal because I was a female. I was an African (American) female. I had inclinations. I thought that was the reason why and that they weren’t ready for me yet. Then later it panned out and I knew they were.” As she continued with her recollection she shared

what happened next. “So...they put me on some lesser roles and gave me some committee stuff and said, ‘Do this. Do this. Try this. Try this.’ I had classes and in those classes I was taking those kids and I was moving them on, and they had my back and those kids loved what I was doing and I was advancing them.” Then I told them, “Give me your roughest kids you think that’s in the school and let me show you what I do with them, and that was in a way, I felt that...I did have to prove myself that way and go beyond. I just had to bust through that ceiling.” Stephens shared that this instance in her journey to the principalship was solely based on her gender. However, she was determined to persevere and prove that she could do the job. She eventually received the position and was able to work with all students and serve as a model and advocate for all students.

Research Question Three: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?

In response to describing her journey of cultural responsiveness Principal Stephens had two clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data. The first one was in relation to her personal experiences with cultural responsiveness. Secondly, she spoke to celebrating and branding her school and students. Finally, she shared the professional development and training of her faculty and staff in cultural responsive efforts.

Personal experiences with cultural responsiveness. Principal Stephens shared her personal journey growing up played a large role in her leadership style. When asked about cultural responsiveness she shared a personal experience she remembered. “When

I finally got to high school I saw one Black teacher.” This was her first encounter with seeing a Black teacher. Then her school took them to a university. This experience got her attention, “I understand exactly why they did it, and it did give me the bug of ‘I can do this’. That experience challenged her, “It started me dreaming big again, and let me know that I could change whatever path that I thought I was on at that time.” Stephens went on to share that this experience carried her and provided a foundation on how she leads her school today.

Celebrating and branding. Based off of Stephen’s personal experience with culturally responsiveness she uses a similar approach with her students and her campus. In regards to cultural responsiveness she shared is I, “always look at my data and I try to see where the walks of life the kids are coming from.” She then shared how she watches the student’s interactions with each other, at lunch, and throughout the day to better understand their stories. “For example, I know that I have a group of kids that are really, really struggling, and most likely have no support. No social capital whatsoever...so I have to build in processes and procedures in order for them to get the support they need, not only here but in their next steps.” She extended that thought by stating, “Because when I hear cultural responsiveness, it’s not only inside the school, it’s outside the school. It’s not just the four years. It’s supposed to be to give them that leg up.” Stephens shared, by celebrating and branding, these experiences give the students the tools needed to be success in school and beyond graduation.

Stephens also values equity, which factors into her belief of cultural responsiveness. Principal Stephens shared her passion about advancing students of color

and those who may have been disfranchised are marginalized. She extended the thought and shared, the students she serves are not always at the top of the list. “My values...were not totally in alignment at first with some of the powerful people in the community, because a lot of the students that I’m dealing with are ‘those students’. I would say 96 percent [of our students] hit one of the at-risk indicators.” When addressing those beliefs and deficit thinking, Stephens is passionate about making sure her students and schools are not at the bottom or perceived that they are not a priority. “I’ve had to now help them see that we’re not at the bottom. We’re at the top and here is the reason why you want us at the top with everybody else.” In response to the beliefs of the community she started a campaign entitled, ‘The faces of Inspire!’ “I went out into the community and... I wanted all the alum to come back...and let me know what they were doing. So I’ve got teachers, parole officers. I’ve got detectives. I’ve got a chef downtown that owns a five star restaurant. All Inspire graduates.” Principal Stephens provided this example of bridging the school with the community and positively promoting her campus. “So I’ve added and added and added to the story so no longer are they ‘those people’ they are community people. She further shared, “I started to feel like they [community] are much more in alignment to where we are because they didn’t realize what these graduates were doing out in the community.” This example not only spoke to showing the community the relevance of the school and the students within. It speaks to the students daily and lets them know they are important, they are valued, and regardless of their starting point they can succeed.

Cultural responsive professional development. When asked about modeling cultural responsiveness, she instantly spoke to professional development. “In PDs I do a lot of it...and I don’t call it that. I purposely don’t call it that, because I think they would tune me out. ‘Oh, here we go’. So what I do is I’ll bring quotes. I’ll have them debrief it. I’ll bring in cases that we processed before.” She spoke to bringing specific instances of dealing with students so they can walk through how to address them if they are in that situation. She also shared, “I’ll bring in kids, where they come and they talk about their experiences here, [and] their experiences before.” She continued to share that she is continually looking for different types of professional development for her teachers. For instance, she is bringing in a 17 year old published poet to share her work and experiences she has had and her culture. Stephens stated she has moved away from traditional professional development and continued to make it relevant to her faculty, staff, and student needs.

Research Question Four: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

In response to describing her journey to the principalship the cluster of relevant meaning that emerged was that of persistence and perseverance.

Persistence and perseverance. In sharing her path to the principalship Stephens reflected on her journey through college and her educational career. As aforementioned she spoke of the professor who blatantly told her she could not teach math because she was Black and a woman. However, this experience did not prevent her from teaching, it propelled her to become a principal. She further shared, there were a lot of people that

wanted me to go into administration, especially amongst the teaching staff, but it took a while, because I love teaching and I didn't want to come out." In the midst of her staying in the role of teaching she had a mentor who challenged her to move to the next level. Her mentor simply stated, "No, your niche is at a different level." That moment encouraged her. "I'm going to do this, keep trying, and build up. And I had...other teachers that believed in me, saw something there, and they were positive. So I do accredit my family and my teachers to getting me where I need to be and supporting me on those levels." From that point on she moved into the role of an assistant principal. In the midst of this role her family moved around. She had experience with literacy program for math as well as experience with the Bill Gates grant. As she grew in her craft she was set to assume a principal role but they had to move to Texas.

Upon moving to Texas she assumed an assistant principal role but kept her eyes on working with at-risk students in a leadership capacity. When Inspire came about as a program for Smithville ISD she applied and served as its director. Under her leadership the program grew and expanded to an alternative high school for students who chose not to attend a comprehensive high school in the district. In her role she shared, "When I stepped in we probably had ten percent of our kids to go to state universities...and community colleges. And now we're like 60 percent." As Principal Stephens shared, she reflected on a moment as a youth where she felt alone on her journey. "You're thinking you're the only person in this world. I one time said, this was the young me, 'People won't forget. People never let me forget the color my skin.'" Looking back on that comment she smiled and simply stated, "I'm glad I never forgot the color of my skin."

Currently Principal Stephens makes time to meet and mentor young and aspiring individuals who want to go into administration. “I think that even faced with the numbers of the few African Americans that are actually practicing being administrators here in Texas, it could be a little staggering where people give up hope and think that this is not the path or them.” Stephens believes she can encourage and empower others who aspire to this great role to provide a voice for all students.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived I may find within the data collected. *In conducting this interview I asked the question, based on the reflexive questions what do I expect to find in response to the interview data from Principal Stephens? After completing the analysis of the questionnaire I felt as if the women who shared laid out specific themes which transcended all African American female principals. As I listened to Principal Stephens share her experiences through her story I was reminded of my mother and father. As she shared of growing up during integration I remembered the experiences shared by my parents about themselves and their siblings and how it impact their lives. I also could relate to the experiences and stereotypes shared. There have been many times when people did not know I was the principal of my schools and when they found out there was a shift in their response to me. There is the unspoken words of ‘oh, she’s the principal?’ Principal Stephens recounting of having to celebrate and brand her school also resonated with me as a high school principal. I have the underlying need to make*

sure people know that our school, and the students in it, are amazing, and yes they are Black, White, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged. Another commonality that I related to was that of being persistent and persevering. I believe all African American Female High School Principals have to push harder to prove they are just as capable as our counterparts. Her story made me reflect and think about my journey as a current principal.

Womanist Theory and Cultural Responsive Leadership

The journey of Principal Stephens as examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership can be seen through her personal and professional experiences. When applying Womanist theory to Stephens, she shared numerous examples where she dealt with issues of race, sex, and class. Lindsay-Dennis (2015) stated, “Black Feminist and Womanist theories are culturally based perspectives that take into consideration the contextual and interactive effects of herstory culture, race, class, gender, and other forms of oppression” (p. 506). Stephens shared experiences that spoke to class, race, and gender in her personal and professional life. She used these experiences to pour into her faculty, staff, and teachers. According to Womanist Identity Model developed by Helms, 1991 (Parks et al., 1996) Stephens falls into Stage IV *Internalization (Womanist IV)*. As shared by Parks et al. (1996), “Womanist IV attitudes represent a more internal standard of womanhood, and that less attention is paid by women with high levels of these attitudes to external evaluation. These attitudes appear, as predicted, to represent the healthiest level of self-perception” (p. 625-6). Principal Stephens is confident in her

identity as it relates to race and gender as an African American female principal and leader.

In relation to Culturally Responsive Leadership Stephens shared, “Being a minority in and of itself, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re culturally responsive.” This realization came through her experiences on her journey. However, as she shared her story her personal and professional experiences tended to relate to cultural responsiveness. According to the six culturally responsive leadership themes as shared by Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) Stephens exemplified all six themes, relationship building, persistence and persuasiveness, modeling cultural responsiveness, being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among other, and caring for others. According to Taliaferro (2011) culturally responsive school leaders are, “in tune with the students, staff and their communities. These leaders are connected to his or her school community in a way that creates and sustains positive relationships among and between parents, students, and staff members. This type of leader understand that it is important for the students to feel that they are part of the school community and that their contributions matter” (p. 1). Stephens continues to partner with the community and stakeholders as she pursues best practices and knowledge to respond to the needs of her students.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PRINCIPAL CHERIE TOWNSEND

Introduction

This chapter is the second of four case studies regarding African American Female High School Principals in Texas. In the initial section of the case study, I present the demographics of the district as shared by TEA. In the second section, I analyzed the interview data of the participant as modeled by Hycner (1985). In this analysis, I describe Principal Cherie Townsend's lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey through the research questions. The story of Principal Townsend was examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership. Cherie Townsend and Terrell ISD are pseudonyms for the principal and her district.

Demographics

Terrell ISD is considered a Major Urban district as defined by TEA. There are 11 major urban districts in Texas. Terrell ISD is a district consisting of approximately 84,000 students, 17 high schools, 18 middle schools, 85 elementary school, and 10 campuses identified as other.

Participants in the Study

Cherie Townsend is the principal of Washington High School in Terrell ISD. Her campus consists of approximately 860 students. The student ethnic demographics are 40% African American, 57% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Two or more race. The

teaching population is 46% female and 54% male. The teacher ethnic make-up consists of 26% African American, 23% Hispanic, 50% White, and 2% Asian.

Data Analysis of Principal Townsend Interview

In analyzing the interview data of Townsend, multiple themes emerged in response to the research questions. The themes in relation to the research questions are shared below. Principal Townsend's lived personal and professional experiences are described through this analysis, as well as her leadership journey.

Research Question One: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?

Two clusters of relevant meaning emerged from Principal Townsends' interview data in regards to the impact of race in her role of principal. She spoke of the perceptions she faced due to race and the persistence needed to overcome the barriers she faced.

Perceptions. When Townsend spoke of serving as an African American Female High School Principals in her current district she continued to stress the perceptions she confronted in her role. When asked how being an African American Female principal influenced her leadership she responded, "You know what? Actually, it has really influenced my leadership as of late. People don't believe. And I'm not sure I understand that, why people don't think that people of color are smart. And they are smart enough to do your job and their job simultaneously, at the same time." Principal Townsend further expounded on the perceptions on race when she stated, "I can get the stares, I can get the looks, the unsure, I don't know what she knows, I don't know if she really knows what she knows." She shared how there is this continual uncertainty, or perception that a

Black woman cannot fulfill her role. Townsend pointed out there are also perceptions about how she is supposed to do her job. “So as an African American principal, it’s been a little bit difficult. People want you to be silent. They don’t want you to speak your truth. And I will speak my truth, whether it gets me in trouble or not, you’re going to hear it. Because I need for you to know it.” At the same time, when she has spoken up or showed passion for a stance in regards to her students there is yet another perception. “It’s just that sometimes people don’t want to let their guard down, and they have a difficult time receiving what I have to say. I’ve been accused of being an angry Black woman because I speak my truth and I stand in it. And I’m okay with that. Because I can be an angry Black woman.” She continued to share, “It’s okay to be who you are. But people treat you differently when you’re African American, because they think that you’re supposed to be in a position to serve them.” The perception shared was not only experienced by her, but by colleagues who were afraid to use their voice. In sharing these sentiments she shared with her colleagues, “Of course, I can have any kind of conversation because I’m confident in my own skin. I think we need to gain a little bit more confidence about ourselves.” Principal Townsend is passionate about refuting any misperceptions that exist about African American Female Principals.

Persistence. The perceptions experienced caused Principal Townsend to work harder. When speaking about the perceptions she and other African American principals experienced, she shared about her persistence. “When we get these jobs, we earned them. And we did twice as much as everybody else to get here. So why do you go under, when you get in these positions, you know, that’s the time to really elevate, and not be

afraid to be who you are.” She commented on her life journey and the work needed to get where she is today. She also spoke to the barriers African Americans who aspire to the high school principal face. “There are barriers, because the goal is to keep us out. Because we don’t need to be there.” In expanding her thought she added, “I have a challenge every day that I face. One of the challenges is being the only high school principal in Terrell that is African American at the high school level.” Experiencing this poses challenges but Townsend passionately alluded to the fact that, “I stay here because of the kids. There’s nothing else to keep me in Terrell, Texas. Nothing else that would keep me here.”

Research Question Two: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?

Principal Townsend had one cluster of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to the impact of gender in her role of principal. She shared of the experiences and perceptions of being suppressed as a female in the role of high school principal.

Suppression. In regards to gender Townsend expressed belief that there are barriers as an African American Female High School Principal. “Of course. If you’re not in a suit, a two-piece suit with the pencil legs, then you’re not, you don’t have the manpower, the capability, or the brains to get anything done.” Townsend felt strongly that there was a form of suppression at play. “They don’t trust you enough to put you in those kind of positions. So it’s the trust, it’s the fear. The fear of you being [superior] over anybody else is there. And the whole goal is to make sure you keep us at a level

where we don't impact you or hurt you in any kind of way. So I'm going to suppress you here, as a female, because you can't know as much as a male counterpart." In sharing her thoughts, she pointed out that females are not viewed the same which poses difficulties. She stated, "They look at you as if you should be at home with the children, while the husband go[es] out to work. And your role is to stay back, stay behind, stay lower than your next counterpart." Although this challenge is present, she did point out that she would accept the challenge and go toe to toe with any male, if the need arises.

Research Question Three: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?

Principal Townsend had three clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to her journey to cultural responsiveness in her role of principal. She spoke of the desire to meet the needs of her students, empower her students, and students serving as advocates in regards to cultural responsiveness.

Meet the needs. In examining culturally responsiveness, Townsend spoke about practices she is putting in place to assist her staff in working with students. She recently attended a training on restorative practices. She also shared her campus is completing a book study on it as they prepare for implementation in the 2016-2017 school year to address discipline. Concurrently, the campus as a whole is working on addressing the whole child with wraparound services. "In terms of their needs, they need a lot of wraparound services. Sometimes our kids come from broken homes, they come from homes with not one parent in there. Some are just raised by their grandparents." The campus has a family resource center to provide services for their students. They also

partner with various organizations including CIS (Communities in Schools), Boys & Girls Club, and they partner with the various neighborhood associations that feed into their school. “We have a lot of things to offer them that extends beyond the school day. And we have everything that they need during the school day.” She shared that they spend time with their students and checking on them to meet their socioemotional needs as well as academic needs.

Empower. In the process of meeting student needs the relationships with them did not come easy. There was a time when students were not open to share what personal issues were taking place at home or what they were without. “There was a time, when I first walked in the building, these students would not have that kind of conversation with you. So they are at a level where they feel comfortable with us, and definitely they’re comfortable with me because they think that they can ask me anything.” This comfort level has provided an empowering voice for students to receive help and services to meet their needs. “Sometimes they don’t get what they want, but they do get what they need. But they’re not afraid to come and ask, or come to say, you know, ‘well, our lights are out.’ ‘You know, we didn’t have anywhere to sleep last night’, or ‘I don’t have any clothes’.” Townsend shared how her student are now empowered and have a voice. “We provide an outlet for them so they always have a voice, and they always have an opportunity to receive those services that they really need. And our kids are in a good place now, where they are not afraid to come and ask for things that they need, and things that they want.”

Advocates. When asked to describe her school and students in terms of accomplishments, Principal Townsend exuded passion and excitement about the students she serves at Washington High School. As an Early College High School she has students who are enrolled in college courses while in high school and can graduate with their associate's degree when graduating high school. At the same time her campus host certification programs for its students. "We have our CTE programs where our firefighters are receiving their dual certifications. They'll not only be firefighters, but EMT and all of those other things which can support them throughout their college." She also shared they have a nurse practitioner program where students are working in hospitals on their certifications. "We have our kids going out of the building to get those things done. We have qualified at least a quarter of our students for college. They have been very successful on their Texas success Initiative (TSI) that they have to pass before entering college anywhere, so they are not taking remedial courses in math and reading." These were just a few examples she shared of students leading the way and challenging one another. "So our kids are really, really pushing each other. And they're our best advocate, really, because they go and sell the programs for us. We don't have to do that work. They do that work." Again, her students were not only empowered but they are advocates in the process.

Research Question Four: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

Principal Townsend had a cluster of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to her journey to the principalship. She spoke of telling ‘her’ story.

Herstory. Townsend is in her 28th year in education where she served ten years as a classroom teacher and approximately 18 in administration. Aspiring to be an elementary teacher she quickly changed her mind after interning with second graders. Moving into the secondary level of education she found her place. Growing up with parents who did not finish elementary school, they made it a priority that Townsend and her four sisters get their education. They all received advanced degrees and serve in some capacity in education. In following this path she reflected, I wanted to be in a “position to help somebody else to get to that level. Because we have these jobs for a reason, and they are to help people, not to be self-servant with them. We’re in this business to help somebody else along the way.” In an effort to help others and be transparent she shares her story with her students. “In terms of my impact on them, they see me as somebody that they could be one day. And I always talk about that with them, and I talk about my humble beginning, from where I came from. Like I tell them, you know, having a bathroom in your house is a luxury...” She openly shares how she lived growing up without the amenities that students have today. She further shared, “I was able to share my story with them, to let them understand how I got from high school to where I am now, and all the obstacles, the roadblocks, and the people that stood in the

way, that did not believe that I could be actually sitting in this position right now.” In remembering sharing that story with her students she told of an event that resonated with her while in high school. “Even from my guidance counselor in high school...I went in to get a financial aid application and my guidance counselor, who looked like me, turned around and asked me who was I getting that application for? And I said, ‘I’m getting it for me. Because you know how smart I am’.” This is one example where she advocated for herself and defied what others thought she could not do.

As a teacher, Townsend was given the opportunity that would change her path in education. “In all my jobs, I have always wanted to do somebody else’s job. So when I was a teacher, I had one assistant principal, her name was Helena Wilmington, and she would do the master schedule. So I would start as a teacher with her, just working on the schedule, then eventually she just gave it to me, and I just started doing scheduling.” That experience opened the door for her to look beyond the classroom. From then on her principal encouraged her to pursue administration. ““Why don’t you go back to school to be an administrator, because, you’d be a really good administrator’. So what he did, while I was in school, he actually assigned me to the sixth grade campus. It was a separate campus from the seventh and eighth grade.” As the administrator over the sixth grade campus the door was opened to exercise her leadership capability. “So along the way I’ve had all of those things happen for me, because people could see the leadership in me. And wanted to elevate me to the next level.” This experience was the catalyst to the principalship that shaped her professional career.

Principal Townsend shared that over the last 28 years her journey has not been easy. “You should just know that this work is hard. You have to be a courageous leader in order to stand in your truth when it comes to diversity and collaboration.” In telling her story she shared of the people who have stood alongside her on this journey. In asking about external factors that impact her leadership she mentioned several key individuals that encourage her on this principal journey, such as her sisters, husband, former colleagues, close friends, and God. These are the individuals that tell her, “It doesn’t matter what anybody else had to say about you. You do what’s best for kids, and you’re going to win every time. So just to keep that clear, the people on the outside that really support me, all of those external folks that I can go to and have those conversations.” These support systems challenge her and build her up while on her journey as a principal.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived I may find within the data collected. *In conducting this interview I asked the question, based on the reflexive questions what do I expect to find in response to the interview data from Principal Townsend? As I met with Principal Townsend I felt her assertiveness and passion for her students and her school. As she shared her experiences I felt myself agreeing with her. I too dealt with issues of being the only African American Female High School Principal in my district. I too encountered barriers and challenges but I used them to move forward. When speaking about being perceived as an Angry*

Black Female I wanted to raise my hand and say ‘Amen!’ Her recollection of her experience reminded me of a conversation I had with one of my superiors (Caucasian Female). She is very supportive and as we spoke about closing the achievement gap I shared how I did not want to be perceived as the Angry Black Female in our district, especially since I was the first, and only one. At the same time, we both know our students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged have to have a voice. In our discussion I shared my passion but I also shared the need to be strategic in my response since I would be viewed as a representative for students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged. Ms. Townsend’s interview challenged me to think about my current role and if I used my voice to advocate and empower not only my students in my high school but those students who looked like me across the district.

Womanist Theory and Cultural Responsive Leadership

The journey of Principal Townsend as examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership can be seen through her personal and professional experiences. When applying Womanist theory to Townsend, she commented on various experiences. According to Lindsay-Dennis (2015), “Womanism is a social change methodology that stems from everyday experiences of Black women and their modes of solving practical problems” (p. 510). Townsend shared experiences that spoke to specifically race, and gender in her personal and professional life. She used these experiences to share with her students and model that they could achieve or attain anything they set their mind to. According to Womanist Identity Model developed by Helms, 1991 (Parks et al., 1996)

Although Townsend passionately shared her experiences in dealing with gender and race issues one may think she could possibly misperceive that she fall into Stage III *Immersion-Emersion (Womanist III)*. As shared by Parks et al. (1996), Womanist III “Rejects traditional gender roles, often becoming quite hostile toward men and idealizing of women” (p. 625). However, her overall stance, beliefs, and experiences were not hostile to men, nor did they idealize women. Her interview data placed her in Stage IV of the Womanist Model Stage IV *Internalization (Womanist IV)*. As shared by Parks et al. (1996), “Womanist IV attitudes represent a more internal standard of womanhood, and that less attention is paid by women with high levels of these attitudes to external evaluation. These attitudes appear, as predicted, to represent the healthiest level of self-perception” (p. 625-6). Principal Townsend clearly integrated her race and gender into her experiences as a high school principal and she was not centered on traditional female roles.

In relation to Culturally Responsive Leadership Townsend did not necessarily state she was a culturally responsive leader. However, in her interview she gave tangible examples of what it means to model cultural responsiveness for her faculty and students. According to the six culturally responsive leadership themes as shared by Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) Townsend exemplified five themes, relationship building, persistence and persuasiveness, being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among other, and caring for others. Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) stated, “Students from different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds sometimes come to school socialized in ways that are different. Educators, therefore, face challenges of how to help

children who come from diverse groups” (p. 178). Townsend is a leader who is teaching her students how to build capital and excel in mainstream regardless of demographics. She is adamant about leading her teachers and helping them positively impact the students they serve as well.

CHAPTER VII

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PRINCIPAL JAIME GALLOWAY

Introduction

This chapter is the third of four case studies regarding African American Female High School Principals in Texas. In the initial section of the case study, I present the demographics of the district as shared by TEA. In the second section, I analyzed the interview data of the participant as modeled by Hycner (1985). In this analysis, I describe Principal Jaime Galloway's lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey through the research questions. The story of Principal Galloway was examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership. Jaime Galloway and New Haven ISD are pseudonyms for the principal and her district.

Demographics

New Haven ISD is considered an Other Central City Suburban district as defined by TEA. There are 164 other central city suburban districts in Texas. New Haven ISD is a district consisting of approximately 5,000 students, one high school, an alternative high school, a freshman center, one middle school, 4 elementary schools, as well as a discipline management campus.

Participants in the Study

Jaime Galloway is the principal of Hope Disciplinarian High School in New Haven ISD. Her campus can receive approximately 90 students 9-12 due to discipline issues. The student ethnic demographics mirror the district percentages with 6% African

American, 64% Hispanic, 28% White, and 2% Two or more race. The teaching population is 40% female and 60% male. The teacher ethnic make-up consists of 10% African American, 30% Hispanic, and 60% White.

Data Analysis of Principal Galloway Interview

In analyzing the interview data of Galloway, multiple themes emerged in response to the research questions. The themes in relation to the research questions are shared below. This analysis describes Principal Galloway's lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey.

Research Question One: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?

One cluster of relevant meaning emerged from Principal Galloway's interview data in regards to the impact of race in her role of principal. She spoke to the fact that she believes class and gender is more of an impact on her as a principal than her race.

Class. When Principal Galloway was asked about the impact of race on her role as a principal she said the following,

I don't think that it has, really, I don't think it's so much race as it is class. Like we were raised so poor, and we spoke another language, I remember selling vegetables out of a red wagon in Kirby when we moved there. And I remember, as I got older, some of those same kids who used to make fun of us when we first moved to Kirby were the same kids who were sitting in class next to me. I feel like some of the things that I've experienced have - class wise is what motivates me more than race wise.

She further stated that yes she is a Black woman but, “I’m gonna have the work ethic I think that’ll blow everybody’s mind, so I don’t think my race really matters. I think more it’s about trying to pull people up educationally because, honestly, I feel like education is what sets you apart.” She extended her beliefs by sharing that the more degrees and credentials put you in a better place. “That is what drives me. And I just- like I said, I don’t think it’s race as it is class.” When speaking about her experience she gave another example where she felt race was not necessarily a factor in her role while serving as a principal.

I think, for myself, I don’t know if it’s so much race as it is just being a woman and then my upbringing, is what I feel like. I will go out on a limb and even bring up my PhD program. I think that walking in as a woman or walking in as a pregnant woman and being around white males, I think that is what gets me the stares or the – you know, they want to rub elbows with the other folks that are higher up, like the other PhDs in the room, and the head gets turned away from me type of thing. I don’t know if it’s so much my race as just the fact that I’m a woman.

Again, Galloway did not feel that race played a role in her experiences, good or bad, more so than her experiences with class and her gender. She further shared that there are race and gender barriers for African American women. “I think it’s more of a woman, class thing that has hindered me. And it may just be in my head more than before African American, I don’t know. It might have something to do with it, but, in my opinion, I think it’s just being a woman in general.”

Research Question Two: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?

Principal Galloway had two clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to the impact of gender in her role of principal. She spoke of the work ethic needed in her role as principal as well as the leadership in her district.

Work ethic. When asked about her experiences related to gender in her role as principal, Galloway commented that she has been questioned as a woman. There have been some instances when there have been questions such as, “what could she possibly know? She’s a woman; what does she know about this?” In responses to questions like these she commented, “I know work ethic wise I’ve got them beat by a mile.” She further added, “I have to work a hundred times harder to prove myself. And I would go out on a limb and say if you spoke to people like the athletic director, I guarantee they would say the same thing.” In sharing about her work ethic she also shared that she does not want her gender or experiences as a woman to prevent her from leading in her role as principal.

When serving at the high school she shared the story about being a mother of eight children. “I have eight kids of my own, so there’s gotta be structure in my life. And I think that when men find that out about me, I think they know that I mean business. And then they have to back off a little bit because I really am very strong in the things that I stand for.” In sharing this stance she gave an illustration of being pregnant with her eighth child.

So I have eight children, like I said. And my children have – I’ve never once taken a day off because of my children. My husband works nights. I work days. He takes ‘em whenever they need to go. However, when I got pregnant with my eighth baby, I just decided I wasn’t gonna tell anybody right off. Well, I was bigger then. I’ve lost like almost 130 pounds in the last year and a half. But back then I was a little bit bigger. And so my husband said, “When are you gonna tell your superintendent?” I told him I’d tell him around 12 weeks or so. Well, at 12 weeks I was wearing business suits every day and stuff. You couldn’t tell. Nobody had asked me anything. So, next thing you know, 18 weeks had gone by and I still hadn’t told anybody. So then 28 weeks, and then 32 weeks, and then my baby was due July 31, 2013. And so, on June 17, my superintendent was in my office and I still hadn’t told him.

As the conversation comes to a close and the superintendent is leaving she asked for time off. In the course of the conversation she shared she was having another baby and he commented, “Well, I had noticed you had asked to be out a couple of times and they were for doctor’s appointments, so I kind of figured that maybe you were having another baby. But we’ve got months to plan, right?” She politely shared, “Uh, Dr. Thomas, my baby is due next month.” Her baby was due in six months. In sharing the story of her pregnancy she spoke of how she continued business as usual throughout the course of the pregnancy without anyone knowing. She conducted graduation, standing up for three hours. Her male colleagues were working on their administrator certifications and they were having to take off work. She even broke up a fight, without getting in the middle.

“Anyway, they still couldn’t keep up with me. That’s just the work ethic that my parents instilled in me.” She also pointed out that she did not want to be prejudged because she was a woman. “I always felt like I wasn’t gonna let anybody judge my work ethic and what I was gonna do based on the fact that I was a woman who was having my eighth baby. It is nobody’s business but my own, and I will always be one to prove people wrong.” This strong example demonstrated Galloways desire to show that although people try to use gender as a barrier, women are resilient and persistent in their leadership roles as principals.

Leadership. In reflecting on a cluster of meaning based of gender that impacted her as a principal was that of her district leadership. In sharing her experiences in her district she alluded to changes that have impacted not only the district but her as a principal. When she joined New Haven ISD she shared that there were a lot of personal agendas and students were not at the forefront of the district mission and vision. Serving in a small town she experienced the shift away from ‘the old school regime’ and nepotism. “We’re definitely moving outside of that with brining in an amazing superintendent and an amazing deputy sup – woman power, super excited about that. Before it was all suits and ties, and now we’re showing what we as women can do, and I’m really proud to be a part of that because I do think that women can change the world.” In her response she shared that men could too but since women had been suppressed for so long it was time for change. “Not only can we bring to the table, we set the table. So I think that’s important to remember.” Another example she shared in regards to leadership was the ability to be progressive as a principal. “I think a lot of

times we were so accustomed to doing what's always been done and not thinking outside the box and bringing in new programs. But now, because of the new leadership that we have, things that we've wanted for years we're being told yes instead of no, or 'If you can tell me how it benefits kids, let's go for it' – that kind of thing instead of being told no." The district leadership of the superintendent and deputy superintendent have been instrumental in her leadership as a female principal.

Research Question Three: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?

Principal Galloway had three clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to her journey to cultural responsiveness in her role of principal. She spoke of her beliefs and values that have impacted her mindset, her personal experiences growing up, as well as the community she serves.

Mindset. In describing her journey to become a culturally responsive leader Principal Galloway stated, "I don't think these kids intentionally are 'bad' or just are troubled by choice. I mean they're that way because they have issues in their path that we need to help them overcome." With her beliefs about her students she shared about her purposeful hiring practices. She seeks to hire the best teachers to reach any and all students that walk through their school door. "One of the things I really wanted when I staffed this campus was to make sure the teachers wanted to be here. It takes a special person who wants to come in, and work with the students who are the neediest of all, and that is what I feel about the at-risk students that we serve here." She shared her passion in making sure the students get their socioemotional needs met, as well as their academic

needs. “When you have discipline and students’ basic needs met, then you can get to everything else. So academics will come, but it’s breaking down the walls to get to where we need to be to be able to educate children is what’s key.” Principal Galloway expressed her passion, commitment, and love for meeting the needs of the whole child in an effort to educate them. “I want people who truly love kids, ‘cause if you don’t love kids, then you need to get out of my office. Because, seriously, there’s no alternative. That’s the only reason why I’m here.” Her mindset of loving students comes through her hiring practices in meeting the needs of her students.

Community. Her goal is to assist the community and not only educate the students, but educate the parents and the communities of the rights they have regarding their children’s education. “So our community – I don’t think that they have a clue what all they deserve. They deserve a lot of effort, and I think we’re in a really big transition stage right now.” She shared how the district recently passed a bond for renovations and improvements to the district. She also shared how the support of district leadership has opened the doors to support the students and the community as well.

You know, like even with the 21st Century grant, I have the ability to write it now because of our leadership. And so I want this program for our kids. They deserve it. I think that our community never really knew that they have the right to demand certain things for their kids. It was kinda like whatever’s given to us we’ll accept. But I think that the community deserves so much more, and they need to demand of their educational system, the ISD, that we want this for kids,

or our kids deserve this; or in an effort for our kids to be able to compete on a global stage, then we need to up what we're doing here.

Principal Galloway is dedicated in partnering with the community and attempting to enlighten them on how they can partner for their children. This effort of culturally responsive leadership is evident in her desire to reach all students so they are ready for college and beyond.

In celebrating and advocating for the community Principal Galloway shared about her former students. While speaking about them she pointed out each child on her wall and was able to share their individual stories. "I've got students on my wall. These are just the fractions of the pictures I have. A young lady, Margarita Hernandez. She's at Harvard working on her PhD. She was born – her mom was 15 when she was born, without a father in her life. She was in bilingual classes, but yet she's at Harvard. She went to Rice. I'll show you a picture of her in a minute. It just makes me super proud." She expounded on that fact and continued on with her personal story.

Personal Experience. In sharing about cultural responsiveness Principal Galloway's own personal experiences guide her in serving the students on her campus. "It's my goal to always [show] people you are not bound by the way you were raised. You know, my daddy was an alcoholic – a loving, loving man, but he had some issues. There are 11 of us, only 3 with my mom. The rest are just out there. You are only limited as you want to be. There are always people who are there to help you. And these kids, when they come in here and they want to tell me sob stories, I don't play into that." As Galloway went further to share she opened up and gave insight into her personal

experiences which contribute to her cultural responsiveness. “So I think that the way I was raised kinda couples with the population here. I grew up speaking Creole French. My parents were from Louisiana. My parents never felt welcome in the school, so it’s always been my goal to go out and bring parents in, ‘cause I don’t think any parent should be excluded from their kid’s education.” She continued to share how her parents could not read or write, nor could they speak English too well. “They worked with their hands. Daddy worked construction. We cleaned houses on the weekend.” She further added, “We have a lot of families that are just like that, and sometimes those families don’t feel like they’re able to come in. And they don’t know what to ask. They’re not very well educated, so they feel inferior. And we’ve got to go out and get those parents and we have to bring them in, and not only work to educate their children but them as well. And so I think that because of our community and because of my background, it makes me more willing to go out on a limb and put myself out there to show parents that we are here for them and that we need to partner with them regardless of their background, you know, and that, really we need to be the servants. You know, every parent wants what’s best for their children, and we just need to figure out how to meet them and do what we need to do.” Galloway’s personal story growing up has played an instrumental role in how she serves culturally and responds to the needs of her community and students.

Research Question Four: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

Principal Galloway had two clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to her journey to the principalship. She spoke of her family's impact on her journey to the principalship as well as her childhood, and the experiences she encountered.

Family. Growing up Galloway had originally planned to major in nursing. At the time of making her decision she found out her brother was sick with pancreatitis. Having to leave the military he decided he was going to go to school to become a high school history teacher. He passed away. After his death Galloway changed her major to education. "So that's why I am here today, because I know that if he would have gotten an education, he would have been an administrator one day. I just know he would have." Galloway further shared, "So I kind of aspired to live my life for him and me, so like if he came back tomorrow, I can give him some children 'cause he didn't have any children. Because I have eight, you know, he can have four of 'em. And that's how much I love my brother." Upon completing the change to education she served as a kindergarten teacher, elementary librarian, TAP (Teacher Advancement Program) Master Teacher, then secured her first assistant principal job at Hope High School. Then she became the principal of Hope High School. Now she serves at Hope Disciplinarian High School with the title of Executive Director of Innovative Programs. Along with her role as principal she attained a bachelor's degree, and two master's degrees, with her superintendency certification.

Along with her brother as an influence she spoke to the impact her parents and her husband had on her journey to the principalship. “Also the way I was raised – the fact that my parents can’t read or write. I wanted to be able to show them that they raised kids – maybe they didn’t have the education foundation, but they had the work ethic and the intellect to be able to raise me and my sister to really want to strive for better. They always said, ‘You don’t want to have to do the things that we have to do to make ends meet.’ So I would definitely say that impacted me.” In speaking about her husband she shared, “I got married at 18, started having babies the next year. So that definitely impacted me. I wanted to be a good person for my kids. I wanted to be a hard worker because I want them to have that role model in their life. And then also my husband. You know, he’s been there. He’s taken care of the kids when I’m not there so that I can take care of our kids and everybody else’s, ‘cause there are so many who don’t have the consistency in their life.” She alluded to serving in the role of mother or father depending on which one is lacking in her students’ lives to ensure they are successful.

Childhood experiences. Growing up she shared about being different and its impact on her life. “I think it’s really important to acknowledge our differences and celebrate them rather than ignoring them. I feel like when you ignore things, then you’re not transparent.” In speaking of transparency she shared her story. “I would not be transparent if I didn’t talk about my own background because of bad experiences and growing up. Like when we moved to Kirby I was put in special ed because of my back – like my speech. And it wasn’t a speech issue. It was the fact that my mom couldn’t say words in English correctly, so I said – and you’ve probably heard me a minute ago.

Sometimes it comes shining through, like I can't help it." In sharing this example she stated, "We have to acknowledge differences, celebrate them, and show that it's okay to all be different. It's a party that everybody's invited to." Growing up differences were not celebrated so she is dedicated to making sure that she is preparing her teachers and meeting the needs of students regardless of backgrounds. "I want to make sure that no other kid is exposed to that, and it's really important that we bring those things to the table." Growing up and moving from Louisiana to Texas played a crucial role in how she leads and serves as principal.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived I may find within the data collected. *In conducting this interview I asked the question, based on the reflexive questions what do I expect to find in response to the interview data from Principal Galloway? In listening to Principal Galloway I expected her experience to be similar to that of the previous principals, the research findings, as well as my own experiences. In analyzing her data I found that her experiences with race and gender were not the same as the previous interviews or my own experiences. She was adamant to share that her journey consisted of issues with class and gender. As she shared her experiences I wondered why she did not perceive race as an issues as pointed out in the literature critique as well as the other participants in the study. However, our experience with dealing with gender issues reminded me of a similar experience. Galloway spoke of working through her pregnancy and not being judged or questioned if*

she could still fulfill her job duties. This was similar to my experience of going through a divorce while working and literally preceding as usual taking care of my roles and responsibilities without letting it be known or impacting my performance at school. Although her experiences emphasized gender and class issues I still feel like our stories overlapped in multiple ways. As I listened to the journey of Principal Galloway I had to come to the realization that although our experiences were different, they were both valid and important to this study. I could not discredit her experience and her perspectives with issues of race and class. She provided insight into a thought I did not anticipate, nor thought about, in relation to my own personal and professional experiences. Her interview data challenged me to reflect and truly think about the various journeys and experiences of all women in our roles. Although our experiences, journeys, and challenges are all unique, I noticed that our stories are really all very similar as African American Female High School Principals.

Womanist Theory and Cultural Responsive Leadership

The journey of Principal Galloway as examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership can be seen through her personal and professional experiences. When applying Womanist theory to Galloway, she shared examples where her experiences with gender and class were more evident than that of race. In contrast to the findings of Parks et al. (1996), which stated, “It would not seem implausible that Black women feel the effects of racism in their lives before becoming aware of the effect of sexism” (p. 628). Galloway’s experiences were just the opposite. Galloway continually felt that her

gender had a larger impact on her experiences than her race. According to Womanist Identity Model developed by Helms, 1991 (Parks et al., 1996) Galloway falls into Stage IV *Internalization (Womanist IV)*. As shared by Parks et al. (1996), “Womanist IV attitudes represent a more internal standard of womanhood, and that less attention is paid by women with high levels of these attitudes to external evaluation. These attitudes appear, as predicted, to represent the healthiest level of self-perception” (p. 625-6). Principal Galloway’s experience with balancing gender roles, such as a motherhood, and her race were clearly defined. She was confident in leading her school, and making a difference within her community.

In relation to Culturally Responsive Leadership Galloway shared multiple personal accounts that led to her leading with culturally responsiveness, “You have to remember that everybody has a story and we have to honor those stories that people bring to the table. Everybody brings their own expertise on different things to the table. Everybody has been through things that maybe we haven’t. We have to acknowledge those things and celebrate them. We shouldn’t shy away from them.” This reflection came through her own personal experiences growing up and moving to Texas.

According to the six culturally responsive leadership themes as shared by Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) Galloway exemplified all six themes, relationship building persistence and persuasiveness, modeling culturally responsiveness, being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among other, and caring for others. She seeks to, “foster a culture that takes all cultures into account with their formal and informal curricula and policies. This type of school atmosphere provides an environment

in which their anxiety is lowered to the point that they can concentrate on learning in a culturally safe environment” (Fraise & Brooks, p. 14). Galloway leads and creates an environment for all students. She uses her leadership along with personal experiences to build a collaborative partnership with her community, her campus, and her students.

CHAPTER VIII

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PRINCIPAL SHAYLA WRIGHT

Introduction

This chapter is the fourth of four case studies regarding African American Female High School Principals in Texas. In the initial section of the case study, I present the demographics of the district as shared by TEA. In the second section, I analyzed the interview data of the participant as modeled by Hycner (1985). In this analysis, I describe Principal Shayla Wright's lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey through the research questions. The story of Principal Wright was examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership. Shayla Wright and Brentwood ISD are pseudonyms for the principal and her district.

Demographics

Brentwood ISD is considered an Other Central City district as defined by TEA. There are 41 other central city districts in Texas. Brentwood ISD is a district consisting of approximately 12,000 students, 2 high schools, 4 middle schools, 9 elementary schools as well as an alternative high school.

Participants in the Study

Shayla Wright is the principal of Ranch High School in Brentwood ISD. Her campus consists of approximately 1,750 students 9-12. The student ethnic demographics are 14% African American, 23% Hispanic, 51% White, 9% Asian, and 4% Two or more

race. The teaching population is 70% female and 30% male. The teacher ethnic make-up consists of 8% African American, 19% Hispanic, 70% White, and 2% Asian.

Data Analysis of Principal Wright Interview

In analyzing the interview data of Wright, multiple themes emerged in response to the research questions. The themes in relation to the research questions are shared below. This analysis describes Principal Wright's lived personal and professional experiences, as well as her leadership journey.

Research Question One: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?

Two clusters of relevant meaning emerged from Principal Wright's interview data in regards to the impact of race in her role of principal. She spoke of how color does not impact the decisions she makes. At the same time she shared that people's perception of her based on race come forward in her role as a high school principal.

Color. When asked about her race in terms of her role as principal, Wright shared that she does not look at race per se. "You know, when I come in I don't look at 'Okay, I'm a Black woman so what would I do?' I look at...I got 1,750 kids. How can I meet their needs?" She consistently shared that she is passionate about meeting the needs of all students. In her response she further stated, "And it's not that I don't see color, because I will be lying if I told you I don't see color. I do see color, but I don't let that hinder me one way or another in my decision making." Wright extended her thought further by sharing, "Sometimes for the students I probably see socio-economic status more so than anything else, because sometimes...the decisions that I make has to do

with income more so than about color.” Wright elaborated on meeting the needs of all students regardless of race. “When I make a decision it’s not per se on color. It’s probably more so on low SES. So if there’s a need we’re going to make sure that need is met.”

People’s perceptions. As she shared her experiences in relation to her role, however, she noted that there are perceptions about her that come forth due to her race. “I think sometimes people are – if they’re not affiliated with the community, or if they’re new to the school often times when they see me face to face I think they’re a little bit surprised.” She further added, “It’s basically based on body language. I never introduce myself unless I’m speaking as Shayla Wright, the principal of Ranch High School. I’m Shayla Wright. My title shouldn’t have anything to do with whatever decision we’re trying to reach. It’s about what’s best for kids.” As an African American female Wright believes, “I think they’re kind of taken back, until they realize she is going to do what’s best for kids. I think initially, ‘I’m not going to say they don’t trust, but they’re a little bit hesitant’.” This example of how race impacts her role as principal was woven through her interview.

Research Question Two: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?

Principal Wright had three clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to the impact of gender in her role of principal. Wright shared of her faith in God as impacting her role, she spoke to the current reality of high school principals, and the impact gender has on the multiple roles as a female.

Faith. When asked how her gender impacts her role in relation to the principalship Principal Wright shared she does not look specifically at her gender. “I don’t look at myself as I said. You look in the mirror and you see. I think more so I look at what does God have me to do? When I start here God, let your will be done.” She extended her thought on gender in the principalship by adding, “Whatever it may be and I say let me be right to your people. And do I don’t go in and say okay, I’m a Black woman today and so this is where – I mean I don’t do that.” Throughout the interview she shared how she does not feel her gender impacts her role as a principal. She does feel, however, that her life has a higher calling and a purpose which leads her as a principal and guides in her daily decision-making process. Principal Wright further stated, “I have a talk with God and say I’m your child. Whatever your will for me today, let it be done and speak through me. So whatever it may be, use me that I may do the work that you have set for kingdom work.” Wright shared that her faith in God is instrumental in how she leads and serves on a daily basis.

Current reality. In speaking of gender, Principal Wright shared knowledge of knowing that she is a rare commodity as an African American Female High School Principals. “Like I said, I was blessed to be able to move up because being the first at a traditionally all White, male position it was nobody by God.” Wright spoke to knowing she was the first African American Female High School Principals in her school and district knowing that the role is predominately led by White males.

If you look at most high schools, most high schools in the state of Texas of course, most of them are led by middle age or older, White men. When I go to

different meetings, typically it may be one other female if I'm lucky. But for the most part they're all middle age or older, White men. I'm curious within the next ten years when they retire who's going to step in and fill those shoes. I think because many of them are middle age I'm wondering if it was more or less you scratch my back I scratch yours kind of mindset. I don't know. But like I said, the perception appears that it's a cliquish – it was dominant by middle age and older, White men.

In sharing these observations and experiences Wright pointed out, "I just think sometimes you get looks when you go to different meetings like what are you doing here. They don't say it, but you understand that look. If you've been on the receiving end, you understand that look." Wright gave an example of this, "I sit down, and I listen, and then when we go around and we introduce [ourselves] for introductions; of course I think they're taken back. 'How long have you been? – I'm a product. You know [they] want to know your background. What do you do? How did you get involved?' Small talk stuff. But I think they're taken back more than anything, until they realize-- oh, she's been there for a while." This is just one example that illustrated the challenging impact of gender on Principal Wright.

Multiple roles. Wright made another observation regarding race in the principal role. She shared there are barriers to females who aspire to the high school principal role. In speaking about Assistant Principals (APs) she pointed out, "Even APs at the secondary level – you don't really see a lot of female APs. I don't know if it's because of the time commitment and many women are trying to raise children, you know at home.

But if you look at most high schools, most of their APs are men. I mean you don't really see many women especially at the high school level." In providing this example Wright alluded to her own experiences, "It's more than just 7:45 to 3:45 and I can be home by 4:30 because at most high schools like Ranch, there's something going on every night." If you are a female you are trying to manage multiple roles. "For the most part there's something going on and if you're trying to raise a family and juggle raising a family, being a wife, being a mom and being involved in your own within your own children it's hard to do that and attend extracurricular events when you work." Principal Wright said it has worked for her because her children attend her high school. However, she still feels, "There are definitely barriers because I think when you look at the big picture because of the role of most women, a mom, a wife, they're juggling jobs before they ever get to school and so sometimes that is a barrier." Principal Wright shared these roles and experiences have an impact on females in, and who aspire to, the high school principal role.

Research Question Three: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?

Principal Wright had three clusters of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to her journey to cultural responsiveness in her role of principal. Wright expressed a culture of caring, a foundation on a strong academic culture, as well as modeling expectations for her staff and students.

Culture of caring. In speaking with Principal Wright about her journey towards culturally responsiveness she shared multiple examples about building inclusiveness on

her campus. In her current role as the principal of Ranch high school she has led the campus the last four years, although she has been on the campus as an administrator and former student. Before taking the reins Ranch high school was the only high school in their district. When the campuses split she had to work on building a sustaining a strong culture. “When the schools split four years ago I think it allowed our school to become closer together as a family. We call ourselves the RHS family. When I communicate it’s always RHS family. When they communicate it’s RHS family or Road Runner family.” She prides the campus on being a family and having a strong base, “The strengths, they know how to build relationships and they care.” She further stated, “They care about kids. They go above and beyond. It’s nothing for you to drive by this building at different times of the night and see cars in the parking lot or come 6:00 you see people coming to work. So they are about the people not only our kids, but it’s about relationships with families and with each other and how can we become better.” She further shared, “They really care about kids. I tell them all the time, kids don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. So you can be the smartest, but if they can see right through you that you don’t really care, they’re not going to learn anything. And it goes back to the relationship piece. You have to establish relationships with kids.” Principal Wright shared an example of meeting the needs of all students. “Recently we started Lion kickoff and so basically it’s kind of like the middle of the road student who may have had some behavior issues at the middle school level.” This program is in place to assist in transitioning students from middle school to high school. “I tell my superintendent the staff that I have I will put them up against anybody in

America and my staff will be on top. They will outshine. They care and they will go above and beyond. They work hard.” Wright shared multiple examples of the dedication and commitment to student success held by her campus. The leadership of Principal Wright sets the tone for her faculty, staff, and students.

Academic culture. Principal Wright celebrated the academic culture and diverse richness of her school and the faculty that leads this charge. “I can go on and on about the kids in our school. Very gifted kids who want to do the right thing. We have some kids of course they’re across the spectrum from the low to the lowest to the high achieving students.” In sharing how proud of her students she shared, “Several different organizations, they compete athletically, academically. Our speech and debate, they were just at the state congress meeting; did very well. As I mentioned earlier National Merit finalists. I mean look up Ranch High School. Academically we do very well. And I just think because our community is an educated community being in the same town as West University, we have lots of parents who push for, when they graduate, when my child graduates they’re getting into West University. And so the mindset is just a culture.” Wright also shared, “Because our school is so diverse, we have the low of the lowest and we have a strong special education department and we have some high achieving students. “We just started Project Search. We’re making sure our students have the necessary skills to make it in the world as they’re transitioning from high school to the working world.” In speaking about the wide range of students her school serves she added, “We want to make sure they’re prepared whether they go to West University, whether they go to Wells Community College; wherever they go, that we

prepared them beyond high school.” Principal Wright believes in establishing and maintaining a successful academic culture for all students regardless of race, class or gender. “We have a variety of programs I think just to meet the needs of all kids whether you’re special ed and maybe even if they’re transitioning to college and maybe not going into the work force. What can we do to make sure we have prepared you for whatever your next steps may be.” Principal Wright wants to leave every option open for her students to succeed.

Modeling expectations. Another theme that surfaced from Principal Wright’s interview was that of modeling expectations. “I try to model expectations. If I say you know what, we have to be out and about in between classes. We have to be vigilant if a kid doesn’t have an ID. So those little small things, and they may be small in your eyes, but in my eyes it can lead to something major at the end of the year.” Wright shared examples where she makes sure her actions and her words are in alignment. “I think people know that I care, and I go out of my way to show that I care. I will never ask you to build a relationship with a kid if I’m always sitting in my office, and ask you to do the work, and I’m sitting behind closed doors, and I’m not in the trenches with you. If you have an issue with a kid you let me know. If it means I’m going to come into that classroom and have a conversation with that kid or pull that kid to my office I will do just that.” She shared her belief in modeling and supporting her teachers and her students. “We have to have high expectations. We have to make sure kids are accountable. So really honing in on some of those same expectations when you were gung-ho at the start

of the school year – when you have eight weeks to go you have to maintain that consistency.”

In setting the tone and modeling Wright further stated, “I think for me it’s just making sure I lead the way. I want other people to follow and that means being in the trenches and being out and about. I can’t expect them to do something that I’m not willing to do myself. So I really try to model, and really show people that I care and encourage them that they take risks.” When speaking to the charge of encouraging her teachers to take risk she shared a key example of modeling her expectations. “At the beginning of the school year it was all about you got to take risks. And so we did a pep rally for the teachers. You know, I’m not a size zero, but I put on a cheerleading uniform. I asked the band to come play...during in-service. I called all staff to come to the commons. I said we encourage you to take risks. Hopefully through this pep rally you saw us taking risks today.” She continued to share how she was out of her comfort zone and asked the faculty and staff to step out of theirs to reach their students. The idea of modeling for her school was one that resonated throughout the interview.

Research Question Four: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

Principal Wright had a cluster of relevant meaning that emerged from her interview data in regards to being a product of her high school and community. The experiences shared from these experiences impacted her leadership.

Wright shared how being the product of her school, district, and community has impacted her journey to the principalship. “I am a product of Brentwood. I actually grew

up in the district. I was a product of Head Start and so I started at the age of four, graduated from Ranch High School.” Principal Wright left Texas on an athletic scholarship and played basketball while earning a degree in business. When she returned to the district she began her career as a substitute at central office. “My old coach came through, and she and I talked and she kind of encouraged me to consider education. I always wanted to go into teaching, but I had an older sister who told me teachers don’t make enough money.” Although she didn’t major in teaching, she did like bossing her siblings so she enrolled in an alternative certification program. She began teaching at the high school as a business teacher and a coach. In the process her former principal shared, “have I ever told you that I think you’d be an excellent person on my leadership team?” Even though she wanted to pursue her masters, she had a family and was not sure she could invest the time to complete a program and serve as a wife and mother. However, in talking with her family they supported her journey.

Principal Wright enrolled in a state university and went through her program with other teachers on her campus. She did not get her first leadership position but did move into an assistant principal role two weeks before school. From there she served as an Associate Principal then eventually moved into the role of principal at her campus. Throughout this journey she credited her faith for getting her to this point. “I think the biggest is just being a person of a strong faith. You got to have – I’m not going to say you, but you better have someone more than you that you can count on because you will be challenged. I think I have a strong faith and being connected to a strong church family and just having a strong, supportive family, establish relationships with our community,

with our teachers, our students, I think all those factors play a role into [my] leadership.” She further added, “If I didn’t have the support of a church family, or a strong faith, or my mom, my husband, my kids, the school I don’t know if I could do this job.” The impact of her spiritual and physical family have been instrumental in her leadership as a principal. These external factors play greatly into her role and leadership as a principal.

In reflecting on her journey to serving as principal at Ranch High School she commented, “I think it was just one door – you know, it seems like I look back over my life and when I became a teacher it was never okay, I’m going to aspire to be a principal.” She wanted to make a bigger impact outside of her classroom. “I said you know what, it was like I had a higher calling on my life because I was making a difference with my 125 students and then I coached. But I wanted more and I saw that I had more to give. I started looking at the discipline and looking at how African American – even before the pipeline, the prison pipeline ever came out – I started looking at discipline and how African American kids were disciplined more often than their peers.” This realization impacted her and pushed her to pursue the principalship and make an even larger impact on students.

In describing her journey Wright shared of an experience that impacted her career and served as a catalyst to becoming a principal. “When I started elementary our district had recently integrated. I didn’t even know that I think like four or five years prior. And so here you are in a classroom. Women aren’t even accustomed to teaching African American kids.” Wright reflected and shared that she didn’t realize this until she was older. Then she shared how she did not have any African American teachers through

elementary or middle school. “Now I remember and I was so excited when I came to high school. I had an African American teacher. It wasn’t until high school. She was my business teacher and that’s probably why I majored in business. I majored in business in college, but I had her as my business teacher in high school, and I knew I wanted to do education.” This teacher, Miss Williams, was an inspiration to Principal Wright. “I had a lady by the name of Miss Anderson, and to this day I still call her Miss Williams. I can pick up the phone if I got something going on.” She further added, “I said one day I want to be just like Miss Williams. She was so loving. She was so kind. Just the way she treated people with the utmost respect. She didn’t care who you were. She had the utmost respect for all kids.” Miss Williams was the only African American teacher on the campus and Principal Wright identified with her as a Black woman. “She was the only African American teacher on our campus so that’s why I identified with her and I know so many of these kids identify with me because if nothing more, she looks just like me. One day I can be here.” Wright shared that this connection of race and gender impacts her students and assists in building the relationships she talks about. She also shared in response to her journey on the principalship she also added, “When you look at a 5A school, I didn’t have any experience and we were a big 5A at the time and I was able to get this position. But I go above and beyond. I may not be the smartest but people know I care. I try to build relationships and I try to be that example.” She attributes her faith in God to her journey to this role.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived I may find within the data collected. *In conducting this interview I asked the question, based on the reflexive questions what do I expect to find in response to the interview data from Principal Wright? In reflecting on the interview with Principal Wright I listened intently to how she spoke to not seeing race when serving her students. After listening and analyzing her data I noticed the progression of change in her data. As she spoke about serving students she mentioned she does not see color as much as she sees the need. I struggled with understanding her stance until I captured the entire picture. As she spoke about seeing her students and her needs I started to understand her response. In examining the data she extended her thoughts to show that she does realize that as an African American female race is a part of who she is at all times. She made mention of holding her African American students accountable as well as being questioned as the only woman of color in a meeting. Her experiences as first made me think we would not have any similarities, however, the more she share the more I learned about her journey and could see the commonalities between us. She spoke about modeling for her campus whether it was for her teachers, her students, or her community. She was willing to take risks and challenges her campus and students to take risks. In reflecting on her story I compared her to other African American females in this study and in my circle. The women I thought about are so ready to be vulnerable as they lead. I think this is an attribute that is engrained in all of us because we want to show*

our stakeholders that it can be done. As a current principal I tell my faculty, staff, and students, I will never ask you to do anything that I would not do. I believe this has helped me gain credibility and assisted in building relational capacity with my stakeholders. I have seen this more so in women than I have in men leaders. However, I believe this is one simple, but powerful tool that is necessary for all leaders.

Womanist Theory and Cultural Responsive Leadership

The journey of Principal Wright as examined through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership can be seen through her personal and professional experiences. When applying Womanist theory to Wright shared examples of relationships and modeling as key components of her leadership. She shared, “Just doing little things along the way to let people know that you know what, I care about them. And it [is] more than just words. It’s the action piece. And so when they know you care, they will go above and beyond even when they are at their wits’ end and want to quit. So I really try to model that.” Those two reoccurring themes came forward when addressing questions of race and gender in the principalship. Roane and Newcomb (2013) confirmed “[African American] women negotiate race, gender and age complexities that shape the way they lead” (p. 2). They further shared, with the limited research that exist their family, their spiritual beliefs, and culture impact these women as leaders (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). The experiences shared by Principal Wright echoes the stories of other African American female principals. According to Womanist Identity Model developed by Helms, 1991 (Parks et al., 1996) Wright falls into Stage IV *Internalization (Womanist IV)*. As shared

by Parks et al. (1996), “Womanist IV attitudes represent a more internal standard of womanhood, and that less attention is paid by women with high levels of these attitudes to external evaluation. These attitudes appear, as predicted, to represent the healthiest level of self-perception” (p. 625-6). Principal Wright has a solid internal definition of herself and has integrated her race and gender into her identity and into her role as a principal.

In relation to Culturally Responsive Leadership Wright shared about being an African American female, “So having that connection but at the same time understanding that for African American kids there’s an expectation too. Don’t be a knucklehead. I need for you to put forth your best work as well as all kids in general, but I think just sometimes you can see and identify [with] people who look just like you. For some kids they need that.” She further commented, “I try to make sure I’m abreast of the different cultures as far as understanding...” Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) complimented the work of Wright by affirming, “The increasing diversity in schools call for new approaches to educational leadership in which leaders exhibit culturally responsive organizational practices, behaviors, and competencies” (p. 177). Principal Wright shared she is aware of cultural differences and tries to be understanding and learn and adjust so she can serve all kids and families regardless of their race, background, or socioeconomic status. According to the six culturally responsive leadership themes as shared by Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) Wright exemplified five themes, relationship building, modeling culturally responsiveness, being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among other, and caring for others.

According to Taliaferro (2011) shared, “Like culturally responsive teachers, culturally responsive leaders have affirming views towards diversity and respect those differences among staff and school community members” (p. 3). Wright uses her personal and professional experiences to shape her leadership and meet the needs of her faculty, staff, students, and community.

CHAPTER IX

RESEARCH FINDINGS: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In the final stage of the findings, I present a cross-case analysis of the data incorporating the open-ended questionnaires with the semi-structured interview data from each case. In examining the perspectives of African American Female High School Principals, several parallels surfaced throughout the questionnaire and the interviews. Through this study, 17 responded to the online questionnaire and four principals who took part in the face-to-face interviews, from across the state of Texas.

Cross-Case Analysis Themes

In analyzing the data from the questionnaires and the face-to-face interviews, similar themes surfaced from both data sets, as well as illuminated the research related to African American female principals. Newcomb and Niemeyer (2015) asserted, “While it is recognized that African American women leaders demonstrate difference in regard to class, sexuality, background, experience, and school environment, they also hold similarities as a “category” (p. 787). In my study, I discovered similarly common themes and patterns to their responses to the questionnaires and interviews. The themes that emerged in this cross-case analysis were: (a) principal race and gender, (b) work ethic, and (c) family.

I found that all of the principals experienced challenges with race, gender, or both in their roles as principals regardless of district type. The principals shared specific examples where they were viewed differently because of their race as African

Americans, as well as perceived as inferior for being females. According to Reed (2012), “at the school level, issues of race and gender are critical within the leadership ranks” (p. 39). In examining these women within leadership roles, it was evident they experienced perceptions, judgements, challenges, and the lack of credibility based off of their race and/or gender. Many of the principals confirmed the need to exemplify characteristics of leadership and strength. These needs were manifested through their passion, work ethic, knowledge, ethics of caring, and the expectation to be the best at all times and in every situation due to the low representation of African American Female High School Principals. In the cross-case analysis of the questionnaire and interview data, I analyzed the themes of: (a) principal race and gender, (b) work ethic, and (c) family.

Principal – Race and Gender

All of the principals, through the questionnaire and interview, shared their experiences with race and/or gender impacting them. The collective data I found affirmed the work presented by Eckman (2004) stating the secondary principalship is male dominated, and Roane and Newcomb (2013) who stated principals in public education are predominately White. The principals interviewed also spoke of being the only African American Female High School Principals in their districts as well as balancing the role of being females. There was the knowledge and realization that they knew they were a rare commodity in their districts, as well as in the state of Texas.

As Eckman (2004) pointed out, female high school principals operate in a male dominated field and there is the need to expand research on them. In sharing the stories of the principals, many of them shared tangible examples of where they questioned or

second guessed themselves because they were female or African American. The principals in this study shared multiple experiences where they were aware that their gender impacted their experience as high school principals. Though interviewed separately, they all shared specific personal and professional experiences where they knew their gender was evaluated and judged in the role of high school principal. For instance, they provided examples of participating in meetings in their districts or professional developments outside of their districts and were seen as different and serving differently from the norm of their colleagues. The principals not only encountered these experiences but expected them. In the data collected, I found that the principals clearly stated they experienced prejudice, whether blatant or subtle, when dealing with various stakeholders or others who chose not to work with them even though they were the principal of their campus.

The findings I found confirmed the work of Bloom and Erlandson (2003) who also shared, African American principals experienced rejection and defiance from their teachers and other stakeholders. The principals also shared experiences and examples of having to prove themselves and show they had the knowledge to run their campuses and manage business in a manner that did not portray them as Angry Black Females as stated by one of the principals. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) shared the following findings, “Each woman’s story suggests that sexism is probably a more powerful and personal agent of discrimination in the work world than racism” (p. 355). My findings refuted their work in that not all of the women interviewed believed race was the primary emphasis of the discrimination faced. Townsend fully believed her experiences as a

principal were impacted the most by her gender, whereas the other three, Stephens, Galloway, and Wright strongly felt that race was more of a factor for their negative experiences than gender.

Another illustration that resurfaced many times was that of challenges as female principals with families. According to Eckman (2004) women experience a greater conflict in their roles as principals with work and family. I found that principals did indeed have to balance their professional and personal roles as principals and women. My findings affirmed the research of Eckman (2004) and Wrushen and Sherman (2008) and provided multiple instances where the principals served in multiple roles successfully as principal, wife, and mother. However, Eckman (2004) shared, “Role conflict occurs as individuals attempt to balance their family and home roles with their professional roles.” The principals did not speak to specific conflicts but they did acknowledge they had to navigate their multiple roles. The principals shared their continued diligence and perseverance in their roles as principals. Finally, the principals recounted various experiences of how being females and African American assisted in their leadership and the ability to work with all populations due to their own personal and professional experiences. Newcomb and Niemeyer (2015) affirmed, “As a growing number of African American women find themselves taking on leadership positions in challenging settings, it is helpful to deconstruct their daily lives as leaders to provide direction for future leaders in difficult settings” (p. 790). The journeys of the principals in this study are an integral piece to the research field on African American females in the principalship. The stories shared contribute to the literature and to the future of

African American females in leadership roles within education. This study also provides insight to African Americans and females who aspire to be future principals.

Work Ethic

All of the principals shared a similar experience of having to possess and maintain a strong work ethic. Gorman and Kmec (2007) echoed the work of Eckman (2004) when they pointed out through their research that women, in general, believe they have to work harder than their male counterparts. They further shared that when women hold the exact same jobs there is still a different standard for women than men. Through the questionnaire and interviews the principals provided powerful examples of how they have to always be better than, smarter than, or ahead of the game just to prove they know how to lead their campuses. Eckman (2004) alluded to the fact that often times, female principals have to choose between their roles of high school principal and the role of marriage and being a wife.

Many of the females within the questionnaire shared they have an unparalleled work ethic in their roles as principals. Eckman (2004) shared female principals must choose between work and family. The principals, both questioned and interviewed, shared they seek to be “superwomen” who are equally committed to both their careers and families. This was made extremely clear in the example shared by Principal Galloway when she was pregnant fulfilling the same roles and responsibilities as her colleagues and teachers without missing one beat. Most of the African American Female High School Principals shared their positive and negative experiences and how they impacted their work ethic. My findings were supported by the work of Reed and Evans

(2008) when they shared, “African-American female principals may confront racism and sexism from their White and African-American constituents, as well as complex and intersecting racialized and gendered role expectations above and beyond those expected of other administrators” (p. 488). Several of the principals shared that their work ethic could be compared to others, regardless of race or gender, and they would outshine their colleagues in the same roles.

The principals also discussed work ethic to show that they modeled the same expectations they had for their faculty, staff, and students. This was also in alignment with the work of Reed and Evans (2008) and Wrushen and Sherman (2008) who shared insight into principal’s experience with race and gender in the principal role. The principals provided examples of modeling as well as working harder, longer, and smarter, just to get their respective positions as well as be better than their colleagues while serving in the role as principal. The principals affirmed the work of Reed (2012) when she shared, “Women tend to feel that they need to prove themselves more than men in leadership. For this reason, they see themselves as having to work harder at leadership tasks” (p. 41). Almost all of the principals, whether through questionnaire or interview, shared they had to work harder than men in the same positions. Reed (2012) extended the thought by adding, “Women with families tend to work even harder to ‘prove’ themselves and their worthiness to be in leadership roles” (p. 41). The principals confirmed the literature with their shared experiences in regards to proving themselves. Reed (2012) confirmed this belief and validated the experiences of the women throughout the study.

My findings reiterated that of Reed and Evans (2008) who stated African American female principals have high expectations that are illuminated with culturally responsive themes of caring. Most of the principals provided contextual examples of how they care and have high expectations for themselves and their schools and they model those culturally responsive tendencies to show what they want as well as to not reflect the old adage, *Do as I say, not as I do*. They are adamant about leading by example to gain by in and sustain a system where people know the leader leads by example. Lastly, themes of persistence and perseverance contributed to the concept of work ethic. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) stated, “The minority women recognized the need to work to change discourses from the lenses of both gender and ethnicity through the legacy they leave for the next generation of minority women [who] aspire to become secondary principals” (p. 466). My research, though it only focused on African American female principals, had similar findings. The women in my study strongly believed their diligence and endurance in their role was not only for them but for those African American female principals to come behind them. There was a clear pattern from this group of principals that demonstrated their passion and heart to leave a legacy and not be lax in any form or fashion. There was the continued need and desire to excel and achieve in every area as principals

Family

Although not all of the principals spoke to the role of their families, a large majority of them did speak to the support they received. Many of the principals talked about external factors which impact them in their role as principal, namely that of family

consistently surfaced. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) shared that although the women in their study struggled to balance work and family there was a reliance on family to provide support as they served as principals. “While some relay on their husbands and mothers for support in regard to management of the home, others remain single feeling that maintaining the dual role of principal and mother or wife is an impossible task” (p. 466). Although Wrushen and Sherman (2008) alluded to the struggle of balancing personal and professional roles, they also shared about the support of immediate and extended family.

In my research I found that the principals studied, garnered the support of their family in multiple forms. Family sometimes consisted of their mother, spouse, children, their church, and their schools where they served as principal. The principals shared that they could not serve in their current capacities without the support of their families. Some of the principals specifically spoke to their immediate families and the encouragement given to pursue graduate school or take on the roles and responsibilities as a high school principal. Others shared examples of the support they received from their church families or extend family members who vied to help them in their journey to their current roles. My findings affirmed the work of Witherspoon and Taylor (2010) who stated there is a connection to spirituality and African American women in educational leadership roles. The principals studied, both through the questionnaire and interviews, had a high regard for their belief in God and His impact on their profession. A large majority of the principals relied heavily on family support, whether immediate, extended, or through their church in their roles as principals.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived I may find within the data collected. *While completing the cross-case analysis of the data collected I noticed that the experiences shared through the questionnaire and the interviews aligned with much of the research presented in the literature critique. I also noticed that the themes which emerged paralleled with the experiences I have had as an African American Female High School Principal. Work ethic was and is a major part of these principals, including me. There is the need to be the BEST in every aspect of the role. There is almost an unspoken rule that if you are a woman and you are African American you cannot mess up because you do not get a second change. The theme of networking was interesting in that as I corresponded with all of the women throughout the study they asked me if I would connect them all. There is the desire to know who the 78 African American Female High School Principals and how we can connect. I also met principals who had completed their doctorate degrees and made sure to encourage me in this journey. All of the participants even asked to see the study upon my completion. The theme of family resonated with me in that as a single mother I too had to rely on my family and close friends. After divorcing I completed my master's degree, waited, and then went on to pursue my doctorate degree. I had to have conversations with my close friends and family and they all let me know they would support me on this journey. Even my daughters were my biggest cheerleaders and always looked to support me in this endeavor while they worked as student-athletes. The*

cross-case analysis themes were a clear representation of not only the women in the study, but of my experiences as an African American Female High School Principal.

Discussion

This phenomenological case study was based on the experiences and perspectives of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. The principals in the study, questioned and interviewed, all shared personal and professional examples of experiences that have impacted them in some form or fashion as high school principals. As confirmed by Loder (2005) other African American women experienced similar experiences, “although these women did not recount stories of blatant racism and sexism, they were quite cognizant of the influence of the ‘invisible hand’ of institutional racism and sexism in narrowing and blocking their professional opportunities and aspirations” (p. 260). Through conducting this study, I learned that the principals continually faced challenges in their roles; however, they had resiliency which caused them to persist and persevere to serve and lead their students, faculty, and community. They faced challenges related to race and gender, perceptions and lack of credibility, disrespect and pre-judgement often times before they were able to meet stakeholder needs. To offset these daily challenges the principals shared their commitment to a strong work ethic, the willingness to continue to hold people accountable, as well as their ability to set the vision and model their expectations.

Summary

In Chapters IV through VIII, I provided the data in two stages. In Phase I, I presented the results of the open-ended questionnaire from the 17 African American

Female High School Principals as they shared their perspectives and experiences in their current roles. I used a phenomenological approach to identify the units of general meaning as outlined by Hycner (1985). This phenomenological approach consisted of transcribing, bracketing, listening and delineating units of meaning relevant to the research questions. In Phase II, I explored the experiences further by interviewing four of the 17 principals in a semi-structured interview sharing their perspectives and experiences through the phenomenological approach as outlined by Hycner (1985). After sharing the findings of Phase I and II, Chapter IX provided a cross-case analysis of the data findings from the questionnaire and the interviews describing the phenomenon of the African American Female High School Principals. The findings in Chapters IV through IX illustrated the perceptions and experiences of principals who serve in various districts (major urban, major suburban, other central city, other central city suburban, non-metropolitan: stable, and charter) throughout the state of Texas.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Throughout the various stages of this study, I learned about the personal and professional perspectives and experiences of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. The principals in this study were transparent and shared their varied experiences related to race and gender in their roles as high school principals. Many of the principals gave insight into their schools, the journey towards culturally responsiveness, and the journey towards their principalships. In Chapter IX, I will summarize and provide a holistic account of the whole phenomenological case study, discuss implications for current and aspiring African American Female High School Principals, and conclude with recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

In Chapter I, I provided a statement of the problem and a purpose of the study. In the introduction of the problem I explained the historic impact of *Brown v Board of Education*, as well as its impact on Black educators during that time and now. I further shared the inequity of students to educators in regards to race and gender. The current literature reflects a disproportionate relationship based on race and gender in the principal role, especially at the high school level. Eckman (2004) clearly pointed out that females in education administration are in the minority in a field highly dominated by White males. I then shared the purpose of the study within the historical context and statement of the problem. The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to

examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas as the initial phase of this study. In the second phase, I focused on and examined four of the African American female principals in Texas related to challenges they may have faced due to their race and gender. Secondly, in this study I applied Womanist theory to the experiences of these principals and explored to see if their journey led them to be culturally responsive leaders in the process. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?
2. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?
3. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?
4. How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

In this study, I attempted to examine the perspectives and experiences of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. The study was open to all 76 African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas. I framed the study through the theoretical framework of Womanist theory and the conceptual framework of culturally responsive leadership.

In Chapter II, I critiqued the literature in relation to culturally responsive African American female principals. As I sought to understand this phenomenon it was difficult

to see if the two intersected. I focused specifically on African American female principals and culturally responsive leadership. In reviewing and critiquing the literature I explored; (a) Race and Gender in the Principal Role, where I examined African American principals, Female principals, Gender in the Principal Role, and African American Female Principals, (b) Womanist Theory, where I examined Womanist Identity Development, as well as Womanist Theory in Research, and (c) Culturally Responsive Leadership, where I provided a historical context of Culturally Responsive Leadership and outlined six leadership themes which led to a culturally responsive system.

In Chapter III, I described the research methods for this study. Upon IRB approval, I used Hycner (1985) to disaggregate data for Phase I and Phase II respectively. I collected data for Phase I by sending a self-created open-ended questionnaire to 59 (of the 76) African American Female High School Principals in Texas. I received responses from 17 of the principals across all of the identified district types. In Phase II of the study, I chose four principals from four different district types (major suburban, major urban, other central city suburban, and other central city) to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews. The data for the Phase I questionnaire and the interviews in Phase II were analyzed using Hycner (1985) which included transcribing, delineating units of meaning, clustering units of meaning, and contextualizing themes. The data findings for this study were discussed in Chapters IV through VIII.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study were presented in three different phases in chapters IV through IX. In Phase I, I described the Hycner (1985) phenomenological approach and presented units of general meaning for each of the nine open-ended questionnaires, which were answered by 17 African American Female High School Principals in Texas through Qualtrics. I examined the responses then clustered them as outlined by Hycner (1985). I then met with four of the principals using a semi-structured interview protocol for Phase II. In Phase II, I asked four principals from four different district types to participate in the interview. They were asked questions about the impact of race on their experience as a principal, the impact of gender on their experience, their experience with culturally responsive leading, as well as their journey to the principalship. Each case study concluded by relating Womanist theory and Culturally Responsive Leadership theory back to each African American Female High School Principal. Upon completion of the questionnaire and the interview, I then synthesized the data from the open-ended questionnaire and the four interviews to provide a cross-case analysis of the phenomenon in chapter IX. To summarize the findings, I submit a holistic, composite review of themes brought forth in the findings from the questionnaire and the interviews.

Summary of Questioned Principals

In Chapter IV I examined the perspectives and experiences of the 17 African American Female Principals in Texas who took part in the questionnaire. The principals who responded represented district types such as major urban, major suburban, other central city, other central city suburban, non-metropolitan: stable, and charter. In Phase I,

many of the principals shared similar experiences in response to race and/or gender impacting their professional roles as principals. As mentioned by Tillman (2004), Eckman (2004), and Wrushen and Sherman (2008), race and gender play a vital part in educational leadership, especially that of the African American female principal. Reed (2012) expounded on this fact by stating, “Once in the role of principal, it is clear that school leadership for women tends to be framed differently than for their male counterparts” (p. 41). Many of the principals stated they had to be firm, determined, and strong, but at the same time they are expected to be compassionate, humble, and flexible to lead their respective campuses. Reed (2012) further shared, “Women school leaders have been described as being able to display their emotional and compassionate sides within their leadership. Within educational leadership, the characteristics women principals bring to their leadership practice are typically undervalued” (p. 41). The examples shared expressed themes of lack of respect and credibility in their roles due to race and gender, a strong work ethic to prove themselves outside of people’s perceptions of them, as well as a will to persist and persevere in the midst of barriers and challenges in their current roles. In spite of the experiences and pre-judgements, there is still the desire to excel and serve their respective students and districts with passion and determination.

Summary of Interviewed Principals

In Chapters V through VIII I conducted four case studies of African American Female High School Principals and shared their individual clusters of meaning (Hycner, 1985) described in their interviews. The case studies also shared where each principal fit

within the Womanist theory as well as the Culturally Responsive Leadership theory. In examining the findings, the four interviewed principals were unique in their roles as African American Female High School Principals. Their lived experiences manifest themselves within Helm's (1991) *Womanist IV (Internalization)* based off of their interview data. According to the research presented, Parks et al. (1996) emphasized the fact that race and gender play an important role in African American females thereby affirming the experiences of the principals in relation to womanist identity development. The encounters shared by the African American Female Principals confirmed the literature by providing tangible examples of social change based off of every experience shared by these Black women (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015). The counterstories shared by these principals was supported by the literature and provided insight to assist researchers to further examine African American female principals. Lindsay-Dennis (2015) further shared, "Womanism encourages researchers to examine intergenerational survival strategies used to achieve and maintain balance among people, nature, and the spiritual world. These survival strategies include mothering, dialoguing, using mutual aid/self-help, and spirituality as a means for solving problems" (p. 511). The perspectives and experiences shared by these principals contributed to research and affirmed the womanist perspective.

In response to data collected in regards to Culturally Responsive Leadership the findings had some similarities. Two of the four principals (Stephens and Galloway) had all six of the Culturally Responsive Leadership themes consisting of building relationships, persistence and persuasiveness, modeling culturally responsiveness, being

present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among other, and caring for others. According to Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012), “Cultural responsiveness should be at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups in multicultural societies; moreover, it is a powerful, persistent, and vitalizing force for improving education for *all* students” (p. 180). The principals in the study exemplified cultural responsiveness, especially that of building relationships, within their responses and through their stories. Relationships were a central component to all principals in their leading of their respective schools. The principals spoke to reducing anxiety among their students and teachers by encouraging risks, and building trust and respect within their environments (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). The other two principals, Townsend and Wright, both had four of the themes described as culturally responsive leadership tendencies. However, they differed somewhat in the four principals interviewed. Both Townsend and Wright exemplified being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among others, and caring for others. The principals maintain visibility and transparency in their schools as well as foster cultural responsiveness by modeling and showing they care for their faculty, staff, students, and community. Townsend demonstrated persistence and persuasiveness, through empowering her students and teachers (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012), while Wright shared the theme of modeling culturally responsiveness by promoting inclusiveness, acknowledging culturally responsiveness, and consistency (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). The findings in regard to culturally responsive leadership demonstrates that the experiences, both personal and professional, contributed to these African American

Female High School Principals being culturally responsive leaders on their respective campuses and within their districts. The attributes displayed correlate with the literature and identify these principals as culturally responsive to their students, campuses, and communities.

Discussion

This phenomenological case study was based on the experiences and perspectives of African American Female High School Principals in Texas. The principals in the Phase I questionnaire and the Phase II interviews all shared personal and professional examples of experiences which impacted them as African American Female High School Principals. In reflecting on the literature in relation to the data collected, the principal responses had a direct connection to the literature critique. The following section is a discussion of the findings, questionnaire, interviews, and cross-case analysis. The discussion provides a synthesized holistic view of the entire study framed through the research questions.

Research Question One: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to race in their role as principals?

The principals who took part in the study shared that race was a determining factor in their experience as a principal. The principals provided examples of growing up during integration, experiencing other's perceptions of them as African American principals, and experiencing barriers, judgement, disrespect, while having a lack of credibility due to their race. One principal shared through the questionnaire, "I can withstand the pressure. I expect to be doubted, criticized and questioned. I am just

prepared for it instead of being shocked by it.” Another principal indicated, “I find myself explaining my purpose. I have to prove that my knowledge is legit and not just ‘street talk’. As an African American female in a leadership role, I have to document, verify, and observe my environment.” Yet another reflected, “I understand biases. I have a better understanding that there are just some people who will not hear what I have to say because of the color of my skin.” The encounters with race confirmed the declaration in the critique of the literature provided by Tillman (2004) who shared, there is the need to investigate and study the needs of African American school leaders in leadership roles.

Tillman (2004) further shared, “The number of Black women in pre-K-12 educational leadership positions, while increasing gradually, is still small relative to the number of White men and women and Black men” (p. 125). I found that many of the principals shared experiences of being the only African American principal at the high school level, while others noted they were the first African American principals in their respective districts. My findings on the sparse number of African American Female High School Principals affirmed the work of Tillman (2004) who stated, there are a low number of African American female principals across the United States.

My research also supported the work of Bloom and Erlandson (2003) who confirmed the lived experiences and influence shared by the principals who participated in the questionnaire and the interviews. One principal shared, “My values, attitudes, and beliefs stem from me viewing life as having the opportunity and privilege of impacting and influencing others.” Principal Galloway also commented on her love for her students

and the need to hire people who love them as well. She stated, “I want people who truly love kids...there’s no alternative.” Reed (2012) affirmed the experiences the principals shared by stating, “Women school leaders have been described as being able to display their emotional and compassionate sides within their leadership. They have also been described as being able to cultivate important relationships, while navigating difficult circumstances to bring about change” (p. 42). The principals were passionate about their roles as principals.

When asked to describe characteristics of an African American Female High School Principal they used words such as visionary, optimistic, compassionate, encouraging yet firm, dedicated, strong, and confidence. These adjectives provided a vivid description of the principals and their heart for their students and their campuses. They shared a unified sense of commitment and pride about their schools and their communities. These attributes resonated throughout the questionnaire and the interviews. Although these principals were rare in number, their stories proclaimed their powerful presence and passion in the midst of issues with race and gender. The examples shared by the principals provided a clear picture of their challenging circumstances as well as their successes which contributed to their goal of transforming their respective campuses.

Research Question Two: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their experiences related to gender in their role as principals?

The African American Female High School Principals in the research study pointed out issues with gender equity as well as the impact of their gender as females.

The female principals provided clear examples of experiencing inequity and discrimination in their roles as high school female principals. One principal shared an example of sexism, “an all-female admin team and the underlying attitude of the district leadership is that an all-female team at the secondary is not good and there must be a ‘strong’ male on the admin team.” Yet another principal mentioned, “I am challenged to the point of often having to prove myself more than other colleagues.” And still another asserted, “As a female, we have to be careful how we speak when addressing staff or the public. Women leaders are often misunderstood when demonstrating compassion. When giving orders or directives to those who are out of compliance, our tone and body language can be misinterpreted.” The examples of inequity reverberated throughout the research presented in the literature critique. Eckman (2004) shared that the principal role is a male dominated role held by mostly White males. Sherman and Niemeyer (2015) stated, “Some African American women principals lead differently than their White colleagues, in part because they have been excluded from established power structures” (p. 787). The principals shared specific examples where their gender impacted their leadership and other’s perceptions of them. Both data sets also provided tangible examples where the principals knew they were in the minority due to gender.

The principals in the study also encountered gender differences with balancing home and work by serving as both principal and mother. One principal commented, “As a mother, I am more compassionate and caring with parents and my students. I think being a female gives me the ability to see all sides of a situation.” Another principal echoed a similar response by sharing, “It is my experience as a mother more so than

simply being a female that has had the more profound impact. When you understand the hopes, dreams, and fears that a parent – especially a mother – has for a child, you’re able to understand what a parent may not be able to articulate.” Although Eckman (2004) alluded to the roles of mother and principal in her research, she referenced women having to choose between their roles as principals and that of mother and wife.

In my research I found that the principal’s used both roles, that of principal and mother, in a collaborative way to serve their students and their campuses. The women did not see the two roles as conflicting, but did share how motherhood played a vital role in their leadership as principals. In examining the data, I also found that the principal role did indeed impact personal responsibilities making it difficult to balance both personal and professional responsibilities. One principal did confirm the research of Eckman (2004) when she shared her work schedule consisted of 60-70 hours per week. This response illustrated the role conflict mentioned by Eckman (2004). Eckman (2004) further shared the discrepancy between the number of men and women in the principal role, specifically the high school principal role. This was confirmed by the TEA data shared stating roughly 5% of principals are African American Female High School Principals.

Research Question Three: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey toward becoming culturally responsive?

The qualitative data shared by the African American Female High School Principals alluded to attributes of culturally responsive leadership. I found that the principals had an expanded perspective about others who are different than they are; they

pride themselves in caring for, and working with the community, and they are impacted and aware of their surroundings and their families. In my study, several of the principals spoke of negative schooling experiences which led them to be culturally responsive leaders. Principal Stephens spoke about the professor who blatantly told her she could not be successful as a math teacher because she was a Black woman. Principal Galloway reflected on her experience moving to Texas and being treated differently because of her race and accent. While others from the questionnaire shared of experiences serving as the campus principal where they were not treated equitably. All of these illustrations found in my study provided insight into the lived experiences and perspectives which yielded culturally responsive leadership tendencies in the principals interviewed.

The principals also confirmed the work of Crow and Scribner (2014) who shared that schools are culturally, socially, and ethnically diverse with pressures to meet the demands of the accountability system. The findings from the interviewed principals confirmed that the principals were culturally responsive leaders, in that they displayed the following themes of persistence and persuasiveness, modelling culturally responsiveness, being present and communicating, fostering cultural responsiveness among others, and caring for others as described by Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012). Although all four of the interviewed principals did not share all six themes, they did all have at least four of them based off of my research findings. Almost all of the principals expressed the desire to meet the expectations of their districts, state assessments, and TEA requirements. However, they all mentioned the need to meet the students where they were whether emotionally, socially, and economically. Principal Townsend shared

of her partnerships with the neighborhood associations, Communities in Schools (CIS), and the Boys & Girls Club. Principal Galloway talked about not only educating her students but her parents and community so they are prepared to partner with the school as they serve the diverse needs of their students. I found that the principals who completed the questionnaire shared the same beliefs stating, once those needs were met meeting the accountability standards could and would take place.

My findings supported the work of scholars such as Geneva Gay (2000), Lisa Delpit (1995), and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) who stated there are achievement issues with Hispanic, African American, and students who have a low socio-economic status. The principals echoed the research of Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) when they stated, “The ability of school leaders to help faculty and staff to respond to language and cultural diversity is critical to meeting the growing challenges that schools face in the 21st century” (p. 199-200). In my study I found that the principals questioned provided examples of responding to diverse needs on their respective campuses by providing resources through partnerships with community members and various stakeholders. The principals also shared similar characteristics from the themes of culturally responsive leadership as shared by Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) such as being present and communicating, caring for others, and modeling culturally responsiveness through their relationships. “Culturally responsive relationships help to reduce power struggles that manifest themselves in skeptical attitudes and resistance” (p. 198). In my research I found that there was an initial focus on building relationships within and around their campuses and communities with all stakeholders to impact

student success. The data I collected and analyzed confirmed the culturally responsive leadership of the African American Female High School Principals interviewed.

Research Question Four: How do African American Female High School Principals describe their journey to the principalship?

The principal participants shared experiences of their journey to the role of principal. Many of the principals shared experiences of persistence and perseverance, their personal education encounters, and their life experiences. One principal shared that her leadership as an African American Female High School Principal, “relates to my experiences in schools and in universities.” Principal Stephens and Townsend both shared how negative experiences with teachers, professors, and counselors impacted their journey to the principalship. My findings were aligned to those of Wrushen and Sherman (2008) who shared the women in their study expressed how their own personal experiences influenced how they led their campuses. I found that the experiences with overcoming differences, facing challenges, and having to prove themselves resonated throughout their responses.

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) stated, “Each woman’s story suggests that sexism is probably a more powerful and personal agent of discrimination in the work world than racism” (p. 355). My research did not find that sexism played a more dominate role, rather race combined with gender together played a prominent role in the experiences shared by the principals studied. In my findings I also found support from the research of Wrushen and Sherman (2008) who confirmed that many African American Female Principals use their experiences, positive or negative, to lead in their journey as

principals. Reed (2012) concluded, “Black women principals are still living with the challenges of race and gender” (p. 55). Although this is their reality, the principals did not shy away from the challenges experienced on the journey to the principalship, rather they used their experiences to grow and impact their students, staff, and community as they lead their campuses.

Reflexive Voice

I implemented reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as noted in my methods section. My personal reflections are italicized to portray my thoughts on what I perceived during the course of the study. *As I reflect on the findings from this study I came in with the intent to learn about other women similar to me. I found a wealth of knowledge and experience that I did not know I would find. I suspected we would all have similarities, but I found a richness that I could not fathom as I read through data, interviewed principals, and disaggregated my findings. I found that each woman had her own unique story that lead to her journey as a principal and culturally responsive leader. I also found that their varied experiences with race and gender, both personally and professionally, had lasting impacts on how they lead and navigated their respective campuses. They used their past and current experiences to strengthen their leadership skills and inform their work as principals. As I analyzed data I found that their bottom line was always the love for their students. Because of their multiple roles as women, mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, principals, students, and more they all captured their lived experiences and used them to impact the lives of the students they served. I felt as if I personally knew each and every woman who took part in this study because I*

could relate to prejudice because I am an African American and a woman. I could empathize with having to be questioned and second guessed because of my race and gender. At the same time I echoed their experiences of being the only one, having to involuntarily become the spokesperson for all women and all African Americans. And having to find a way to educate teachers on how to be culturally responsive leaders within their classrooms when they do not know they even need this knowledge to reach the students they serve. This experience has changed my life forever and truly impacted my journey through the principalship and beyond.

Womanist Theory

In examining the application of Womanist theory on the principals I found that all four of the principals fell into Stage IV *Internalization (Womanist IV)*. According to Moradi (2005), “Womanist identity development is characterized by moving from an externally based to an internally based definition of oneself as a woman” (p. 226). The term womanist refers to the work of Black feminist theorist who look at race, gender, and social class and the combined oppression of them on African American women (Moradi, 2005). Lindsay-Dennis (2015) added, “Womanism is a social change methodology that stems from everyday experiences of Black women and their modes of solving practical problems” (p. 510). In my study I found that the women interviewed shared their lived experiences while using them to inform their beliefs and leadership. Parks et al. (1996) shared the four levels of Womanist identity as 1) Preencounter (Womanist I) described as accepting traditional sex roles and denial of societal bias; 2) Encounter (Womanist II) is described as questioning and confusion regarding gender

roles within society expectations; 3) Immersion-Emmersion (Womanist III) is described as the woman being uncomfortable with Womanist II but holds a firm perspective; and 4) Internalization (Womanist IV) described a woman who achieves an internally defined and integrated identity. Based off of my findings and the experiences shared by the four principals they all fell within the Internalization (Womanist IV) level in that they internally defined themselves as women.

Parks et al. (1996) shared in regards to Womanist IV, “In this stage the woman is able to develop a view of womanhood without an undue dependence on either the traditional or the feminist viewpoint” (p. 625). Principal Stephens shared her encounters with integration growing up as well as people’s perceptions of her as a Black woman transitioning into administration. Lastly she shared her experience with having to be persistent and persevere in spite of the misperceptions about her. Principal Townsend reflected on the perceptions she experienced for being an assertive Black woman who dealt with suppression as well as perceptions about race and gender in her role as principal. She concluded by sharing ‘herstory’ and experiences that were instrumental in her becoming a high school principal. Principal Galloway spoke to her experience with classism and sexism growing up and as a principal. She pointed out her experience through her eighth pregnancy and fulfilling her job responsibilities without missing a beat. She shared her work ethic and passion to serve not only her students but her community in the process. Lastly, Principal Wright provided a glimpse into her experience with race and gender as the first African American female high school principal in her district. She also spoke to the perceptions she encounter as a principal.

She also shared about her faith and family as external factors that have played a pivotal role in her journey to the principalship. The stories of these African American Female High School Principals though similar were extremely unique. Their stories provided a picture of the day-to-day experiences they encountered as African American females. Their experiences portrayed their internal confidence and reiterated their level, Womanist IV Internalization. All of these women rejected traditional gender roles as pointed out by Parks et al. (1996). These women defied societal expectations and used their experiences and challenges to shape their leadership and impact their students, schools, and communities. In reflecting on lived experiences they shared in the study, I found that their encounters with race and gender led them to be culturally responsive.

Implications for African American Female High School Principals

There have been separate studies conducted on African American Principals as well as culturally responsive leaders. However, there have not been studies that meld the two and focus on the experiences and perspectives of these principals in relation to cultural responsiveness. Specifically, there are limited studies on the descriptors and what truly defines a culturally responsive leader. This current study provides compelling insight into the stories, experiences, and perspectives of African American Female High School Principals. It also provides tangible examples and insight into principals who are dealing with issues of race and gender in their current roles in 2016. The results from this study have multiple implications for current African American Female High School Principals as well as those who aspire to the role such as gender inequity, work ethic, and persistence and persuasiveness.

District Support

As described by the African American Female High School Principals, district support and leadership are essential to success. Jean-Marie (2013) stated, “Despite the slow but increasing representation of African American female principals, those who pursue positions in educational leadership often face a unique set of challenges associated with the complexity of their gender, race, and age” (p. 616). This was confirmed by the principals in the study who shared experiences from their districts. One principal shared, “We have a great superintendent who models the expectations and is student centered. He provides us with tools through the district leadership team that has helped me to be a better leader on my campus.” Another principal simply stated, “Our district leadership is supportive and my staff have a sense of belonging.” While another principal lamented, “I have not grown much professionally under the organization system of reporting to Executive Directors who supervise 7 – 12 principals.” Yet another principal expressed concern and commented, “For me, district has not been my biggest supporter. Most of my challenges are with the district because I follow policies and procedures and I do not allow them to define me.” The mixed experiences provide examples which affirm the need for district support. The support could be provided in the form of a leadership development course sponsored by the district to mentor and model for African American principals. Simultaneously, districts must meet the needs of African American Female High School Principals by providing support systems and role models for these leaders. Sherman and Wrushen (2009) pointed out, “Without a large number of women role models in the most coveted leadership positions, women teachers

do not perceive themselves as potential administrative candidates as often as men” (p. 173). By providing role models, aspiring principals can visualize themselves in these roles and know that it is possible to serve as a principal in spite of perceptions about race and gender. At the same time Sherman and Wrushen (2009) extend this thought by submitting, “Women leaders are expected to not only adopt the same leadership patterns as men but perform professional tasks at the same rate as men, on top of maintaining responsibilities for families, thus leading many to report having trouble with the management of increased responsibilities” (p. 173). As shared by the principals in this study, districts must provide opportunities and support for current African American female principals, as well as actively seek these women to fulfill these crucial roles in education. Districts need to be proactive in increasing the number of women principals, especially African American female. This can be accomplished by connecting with higher education programs, especially HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). Districts can also grow their own and invest in African American teacher leaders who have aspirations to serve as high school principals. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) stated, “Increasing the number of women in secondary positions sets the stage for an administrative pool that is more reflective of the overall composition of educators working in secondary settings and ensures role models and networks of support for those who aspire to formal leadership positions” (p. 459). Districts should consider creating networking systems to support African American female principals to grow the number of females and women of color in the role of the high school principalship.

African American Female High School Principal Network

African American Female principals experience less role models in the role of principal. Sherman and Wrushen (2009) shared, “They experience limited exposure to leadership opportunities that would provide them the means of being viewed as having leadership potential and skills.” (175). As previously mentioned African American Female High School Principals make up approximately 5% of all principals in the state of Texas. With the limited number of principals in this leadership group Sherman and Wrushen (2009) asserted, “It is equally important for women to develop images of themselves as confident leaders.” (175). By providing a network, African American Female High School Principals will have the opportunity to build capacity and grow aspiring principals. Districts and higher education programs can promote networking opportunities through professional women’s organizations in an effort to bring these women together. Sherman and Wrushen (2009) commented that many female principals receive support from their spouses, other female principals, and former principals. The principals in my study confirmed their work and stated they too receive support from their family support systems. Sherman and Wrushen (2009) further stated, “Black women leaders have reported relying on extended family to help with the care of their children” (p. 177). This was illustrated in my research when Principal Wright shared of her family supporting her while she pursued her principal certification. The principals who participated in the questionnaire also wrote of the support they received from external influences such as their family. While family support is important Sherman and Wrushen (2009) also suggested, “Although encouragement is essential, secondary

women principals have limited female role models and networks of support” (p. 175).

The ability to network is essential if the number of African American Female High School Principals are to increase and if districts desire to support current African American Female High School Principals.

Professional Development

The principals in the multiple case studies all had experiences which led them to be culturally responsive in their leadership style. Newcomb and Niemeyer (2015) confirmed, “Some African American women principals lead differently than their White colleagues, in part because they have been excluded from established power structures. Restricted access to resources and frustrations with exclusionary bureaucracies prompted creativity and risk-taking in their leadership roles” (p. 787). The principals affirmed the literature by sharing specific experiences with the impact of race and gender on their leadership. The principals also alluded to the reality that these experiences come with the role of principal if you are an African American female. In an effort to capitalize on these experiences professional development opportunities can be used to foster cultural responsiveness on campuses and within districts. Principal Stephens shared her experiences in providing culturally responsive professional development for her faculty and staff. Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) shared, “CRL develops trusting relationships, models culturally responsive behaviors, and fosters culturally responsive teaching. When teachers match that instructional practice to students’ cultures, it helps students to use their cultural assets as a scaffold for learning” (p. 200). When the leader facilitates learning of cultural responsiveness there is a direct impact on student learning.

When culturally responsive leadership is led through professional development, “CRL helps teachers understand how to learn from their students and improve their teaching to better address their students’ learning needs” (200). Fraise and Brooks (2015) extended the emphasis on professional learning by stating, “Schools should foster a culture that takes all cultures into account with their formal and informal curricula and policies” (p. 14). The principals interviewed demonstrated their cultural responsive leadership with their informal curricula and policies when they shared specific examples of their hiring practices to reach all students, partnerships with communities and stakeholders, and their collective resources to meet social, emotional, and economic needs of students regardless of backgrounds. Fraise and Brooks (2015) extended this thought by adding, “Culturally relevant pedagogy is focused on academic and non-academic success. Importantly, while academic skills are at the heart of this orientation toward education, it also makes clear that these skills must be relevant inside and outside of the classroom. Success, then, is not limited to strictly classroom success, but also to success more broadly conceived as enhanced quality of life, which also includes economic, social, and political prosperity” (p. 15). Professional development provided by these principals will positively impact their teachers who will in turn influence and teach their students. Taliaferro (2011) stated, “School leaders who are culturally responsive understand that culture matters and an environment that is accepting provide the opportunity or vehicle needed to create a culture of academic excellence. Culturally responsive leaders understand that to close the achievement gap, they must first close the opportunity gap for all students” (p. 6). The principals within the study were aware and proactively

investing in opportunities to improve their culture and systemically impact all students. The opportunity to build and sustain cultural responsive professional development was an essential piece of the leadership of the African American Female Principals interviewed.

Focus Issues with the Findings

Findings of this study should be understood with consideration of the following focused limitations:

1. The sample (for questionnaires) of African American Female High School Principals was drawn from local school districts in the state of Texas.
2. The sample (for interviews) selected was dependent on the number of African American female high school principals who volunteered to be interviewed for the study and their proximity to the researcher (200-300 mile radius).
3. The research was conducted during the school year to provide flexibility with individual schedules, testing schedules, and work schedules to provide time to gather the data needed to complete the research.
4. My own experience as an African American Female High School Principals and PhD student may be viewed as influencing the creation of the open-ended questionnaire, the interview protocol, and the interpretation of the principals' experiences and perspectives.
5. My race and gender as an African American Female may have impacted how

the participants described and shared their perspectives and experiences. To reduce this possibility, I did not share my personal or professional experiences as an African American Female High School Principals in Texas during the interviews.

Recommendations for Further Research

Through this phenomenological case study, I provide a platform to continue research on this significant topic. First, future researchers may consider the findings of this study. This research can be expanded to include all African American Female High Schools in the U. S. This larger-scale study could explore perceptions and experiences of women throughout the United States. This study could also expand to include other women of color besides African American female principals. I found that the personal and professional experiences and perspectives of the principals impacted their leadership and caused them to lead with culturally responsiveness. In an effort to expand this study one could venture to find if other races and the male gender impact principals to be culturally responsive. This further research could affirm the findings shared and provide a parallel to the findings regarding the African American Female High School Principals in this study.

A second idea would be to examine the differences of African American Female Principals at the various levels, elementary, middle, and high school. This would provide research on if the experiences differ through the various levels of schooling. The findings shared regarding African American females at the high school level demonstrated the fact that women are rare within the high school principal role, and even rarer when the women are African American. In expanding this research and knowing

there are more women at the elementary and middle school level, further research could be conducted to see if gender differences are as prevalent at the elementary and middle school level as they are at the high school level. In addition to studying principals at the elementary and middle school level a follow-up study can be conducted to determine if their experiences lead them to become culturally responsive leaders.

Lastly, one of the interviewees Principal Stephens shared, “being a minority in and of itself, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re culturally responsive.” In considering culturally responsive leaders one may think that these types of leaders are only African Americans or people of color. However, if the research were extended to include Caucasian females and their personal and professional experiences as high school principals would they tend to be culturally responsive? The research findings presented showed that the experiences shared, dealing with race and gender issues, contributed to knowledge and actions that led to becoming culturally responsive leaders. I am interested to know if similar results would be produced based off of their lived experiences with race and gender. At the same time research could be conducted on Latino Females as well as Caucasian men.

Concluding Thoughts and Final Reflection

In *The Mis-Education of the Negro* by Carter G. Woodson (1933) he shared the following, “The conditions of today have been determined by what has taken place in the past, and in a careful study of this history we may see more clearly the great theatre of events in which the Negro has played a part” (p. 9). I opened my dissertation by sharing demographic information on our schools with our students and teachers. I also provide a

background and history of the education system in terms of African Americans and the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, the most intriguing part of the beginning of the dissertation consisted of the story of Fannie Jackson Coppin, the first African American female principal. Her story was and is the catalyst for African American educators everywhere. Her story provided context and paved the way to share her story as well as others who have come on this journey. As I conclude my dissertation, I am humbled by the stories shared by African American Female High School Principals in the twenty-first century, both personal and professional. I had the opportunity to truly listen, learn, and understand the stories and experiences of all of these principals and also reflect on my own positionality as a first, like Fannie Jackson Coppin. I heard and shared these principals' passion, their fears, their hopes, dreams, and even their current realities. More importantly, I heard and shared their hearts for their students, teachers, and their communities. Each and every woman enjoyed her role as principal in spite of the challenges, prejudgments, and misperceptions held by others. It is my hope that people take the time to read their stories, share these stories, and then share their own stories, as I too, have shared mine with the readers.

As a current sitting high school principal, who is an African American female, I can relate to many of the examples and illustrations shared. I can relate to the early morning and late nights in order to make sure the campus is the best in the district. I can understand the principal who shared that she feels she is called by God to serve and make a difference. I can appreciate the principal who experienced letting her AP of a different hue speak for her because the stakeholder did not want to talk to the African

American principal of the school. As I reflect upon their stories and lived experiences, I am encouraged to be persistent, persuasive, and to persevere. I am empowered to model and mentor young women of color who aspire to the role of principal. I am honored to serve my teachers who work countless hours to reach each and every student who walks through our schoolhouse doors. I am also humbled to wake up every morning and go to high school and prepare all students for life beyond graduation.

As I conclude this chapter of my life I am inspired further to share my story. As a single mother who was teaching as a middle school teacher, I had no idea I was using cultural responsiveness to reach my students. All I knew was that the students I served needed to see and hear of stories, and articles, and documents that presented multiple perspectives and cultures. As I pursued my master's degree I learned about cultural responsiveness. I learned about bringing culture into the classroom. I learned about leading with cultural responsive tendencies, and I knew that when I became an administrator I had to infuse cultural responsiveness into my campus. As a graduate student and a principal I am aware that all students have to be served and given the best opportunity to excel in high school, but more importantly beyond. It is our job as educators to ensure that all students have this opportunity regardless of demographics or socioeconomic status. It is also our job to provide education and resource to our current and aspiring administrators and teachers so that every campus can reach every child that walks through their doors. I passionately believe that when all educators have a lens of cultural responsiveness our schools will change. All leaders will aspire to serve all students and invest in all teachers. The entire system will change and be positively

impacted due to the inclusive nature of cultural responsiveness and culturally responsive leadership, particularly as that leadership is represented by educators who are in a small, but mighty minority of women—African American Female High School Principals.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL TO AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Howdy!

My name is Tiffany Spicer and I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University under the direction of Dr. Beverly Irby. I am interested in examining the perspectives and experiences of African American Female High School Principals in Texas related to their challenges with race and gender. I selected this topic for my dissertation to find the limited number of African American Female High School Principals and expand the research on African American female leaders as well as contribute to literature on gender, race, and leadership.

As a current sitting high school principal in Texas and a doctoral student I do realize that your time is precious. Please know that you have no obligation to complete the open-ended survey/questionnaire. If you choose to participate, the information obtained in connection with this study that could be identified with you or your school will remain confidential. Each survey will have an assigned participant number. Since I am specifically looking at principal experience and perspective, I ask that you reflect on your personal and professional experiences as an African American Female High School Principals and answer the open-ended survey questions in the link below.

https://tamucehd.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_cDccvv5qly1Jarb

The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete. In order to analyze the data, I would like to receive the surveys back by February 23, 2016. I have also attached an information sheet about the study for your review. If you have any questions about the survey, you may contact me at the phone number or email listed below.

I appreciate your time and effort in this matter. Your input will be valuable in adding to the information about African American Female High School Principals in Texas and across the nation. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Tiffany Spicer
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B
OPEN-ENDED SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please describe the characteristics of an African American Female High School Principals.
2. How long have you been in administration? What specific positions and how long?
3. How have your experiences as a female impacted you as a high school principal?
4. How have your experiences as an African American impacted you as a high school principal?
5. What are some challenges you have faced as an African American Female High School Principals?
6. What characteristics make up your leadership behaviors?
7. What are external forces that have impacted your leadership?
8. How has the organization of the district and campus impacted your leadership?
9. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with you superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?
10. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview either in person, telephone, or online?

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about yourself: Professional History, Experience as a leader, Path to leadership.
2. Describe the teachers in your school (In terms of their attitudes, values, and beliefs about schooling; in terms of instructional strength).
3. Describe the students in your school (In terms of needs and accomplishments).
4. Describe the community your school serves (In terms of demands).
5. How does the diversity in this school and community influence your leadership style?
6. How has being an African American female principal influenced your leadership?
7. What challenges have you faced in regards to race as an African American principal?
Do you believe there are barriers for African Americans who aspire to the high school principal role?
8. What challenges have you faced in regards to gender as a female principal? Do you believe there are barriers for females who aspire to the high school principal role?
9. What are external factors that have impacted your leadership?
10. How has the organization of the district and campus impacted your leadership?
11. How have your values, attitudes, and beliefs impacted your leadership? Are they aligned with your superiors and those who work with you? In what ways, if yes or no?

12. What successes have you experienced as an African American Female High School Principals?
13. What specific experiences, good or bad, impacted you on your journey to the principalship?
14. How do you as a leader understand culturally responsive leadership? What makes culturally responsive leadership different from other forms of leadership?
15. What experiences have helped you become a culturally responsive leader?
16. How do you model culturally responsive leadership?
17. Is there anything else I should know that will speak to your leadership and your thoughts on culturally responsive leading at a high school?

APPENDIX D
STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Culturally Responsive Leadership: A Phenomenological Case Study on African American Female High School Principals

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Tiffany Spicer, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas related to their challenges with their race and gender (Phase I). I selected this topic for my dissertation because I am one of the African American Female High School Principals in Texas. I want to examine the shared experiences of African American females in this role in relation to culturally responsive leadership.

Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you have been identified as an African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?

There are 78 African American Female High School Principals in Texas. 76 will be invited to participate in this study.

What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?

The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?

You will be asked to reflect on your experiences and perspectives as an African American Female High School Principals and answer an open-ended survey/questionnaire. Your participation in this study will last up to 20-30 minutes.

Are There Any Risks To Me?

The things that you will be doing are no more risks than you would come across in everyday life. The risk associated with participation in this study may be associated with a breach of privacy or confidentiality.

Will There Be Any Costs To Me?

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?

You will not be paid for being in this study.

Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Tiffany Spicer and Beverly Irby will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Beverly Irby's office at TAMU; and computer files will be protected with a password. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who may I Contact for More Information?

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Beverly Irby, PhD, to tell her about a concern or complaint about this research at xxx-xxx-xxxx or beverly.irby@tamu.edu.

You may also contact the Protocol Director, Tiffany Spicer at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Tiffanyspicer@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in

this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University.

By completing the survey, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Tiffany Spicer

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Culturally Responsive Leadership: A Phenomenological Case Study on African American Female High School Principals

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Tiffany Spicer for her dissertation under the direction of Beverly Irby, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives and experiences of 76 African American Female High School Principals in Texas related to their challenges with their race and gender. I will focus on and examine four of the African American female principals related to their challenges with race and gender (Phase II). I selected this topic for my dissertation because I am one of the African American Female High School Principals in Texas. I want to examine the shared experiences of African American females in this role in relation to culturally responsive leadership.

Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you have been identified as an African American Female High School Principals in the state of Texas.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?

There are 78 African American Female High School Principals in Texas. 76 will be invited to participate in this study.

What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?

The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?

You will be asked to reflect on your experiences and perspectives as an African American Female High School Principals and participate in an interview that lasts 45-60 minutes.

If you volunteer for the Interview:

The interview will last about 45-60 minutes. During this interview, I will either interview you in person or by phone to ask you questions from an open-ended survey.

This interview should only last 45-60 minutes. **I will ask you to sign this consent form and indicate if you are willing to be audio recorded. You will need to sign this form and return to me if you are participating in the interview.**

Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?

The researchers will make an audio recording during the study so that the data can be validated only if you give your permission to do so. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in the interview.

Please indicate your decision below by initialing in the space provided.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

_____ I **do not** give my permission for audio/video recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

Are There Any Risks To Me?

The things that you will be doing are no more risks than you would come across in everyday life. The risk associated with participation in this study may be associated with a breach of privacy or confidentiality.

Will There Be Any Costs To Me?

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?

You will not be paid for being in this study.

Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Tiffany Spicer and Beverly Irby will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Beverly Irby's office at TAMU; and computer files will be protected with a password. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who may I Contact for More Information?

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Beverly Irby, PhD, to tell her about a concern or complaint about this research at xxx-xxx-xxxx or beverly.irby@tamu.edu.

You may also contact the Protocol Director, Tiffany Spicer at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Tiffanyspicer@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study.

You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

Participant's Signature

Date

Printed Name

Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:

Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

Signature of Presenter

Date

Printed Name

Date